

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When do you remember feeling like a complete stranger?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles...assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.

And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 2:19-3:6 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How do the following truths about Jesus' body impact you personally?

- Jesus' crucified, broken body on the cross took on your guilt and punishment.
- Jesus' physically resurrected body shows that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and gives eternal life without death to any who trust in Jesus.
- Jesus' "body" known as the church is a family of forgiven people empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue Jesus' work on earth.

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I am so thankful to be a part of your plan, a part of your people, and a part of your presence here on earth! May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Where do you feel you really belong?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

*The Apostle Paul described how Jesus made peace in the human race by creating the church:*

But some of these branches from Abraham's tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree. But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

"Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me." Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn't believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either.

Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong. **Romans 11:17-24 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Why is belief in Jesus crucial to your success?

What does the Apostle Paul encourage us to fear?

God is described as both "kind" and "severe" according to whether someone disobeys or trusts in his kindness. Why is trusting in God's kindness essential to your salvation?

Why is humility important to approaching God and his family?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for giving me the extreme gift of being a part of your family. Thank you for recording history for me through the Bible so I can learn to trust in your kindness and continue in believing in Jesus!

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

How do you typically approach God? Timidly? Carelessly? Carefully? Boldly? Angrily? Apologetically? Happily?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored. **Ephesians 3:7-13 NLT**

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

"God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Can you restate this INCREDIBLE statement in your own words?

Through being a part of Jesus' body, the church, we have "endless treasures available" to us through Jesus. Name some that mean a lot to you.

How do you typically approach God?

How does God, through this Scripture, teach us to approach him?

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I think it is incredible that you use the church, which is sometimes faltering and short-sighted, to show your wisdom and power to the heavenly beings—the angels and demons learn about your greatness and grace by watching you love and forgive and empower us!

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could have anything *forever*, what would it be?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. **Ephesians 3:14-21 NLT**

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

If you have ever struggled to find significance/importance/respect or security/acceptance/love, can it get any better than this? God knows you fully, forgives you completely, and fills you powerfully. God fills you with his own pure heart and presence and chooses to live both **IN** and **THROUGH** you, making your body, mind, and soul alive with his presence.

Why is it insufficient to "believe in yourself" or "be your best self" or "be all you can be" without Jesus?

Personally embrace and declare what Paul said: "Christ will make his home in MY heart as I trust in him!" Live in that reality today!

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I understand that the price of admission was paid for me, and my role is to show up, boldly and humbly walking into your presence. You have given me greater gifts than I deserve, but I genuinely need what you give me. And the people in my life need me to be more than I can be on my own. Fill me with your power and presence...use me to fulfill your powerful plan!

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

What is the most important team you have ever been on, and why?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. **Ephesians 4:1-13 NLT**

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Since YOU have been called by God, how will you "lead a life worthy of your calling" today?

Why did Jesus "descend to our lowly world" and then ascend "higher than all the heavens"?

Jesus' body, the church, is Jesus' presence on earth. As Jesus was wise, sacrificial, and generous, so we are called to be incredibly powerful **Jesus' way**. How does Jesus provide change in the world—real, lasting, powerful change?

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for giving gifts to the church so we can be your change-agents in a world that is blind, broken, and in need of reconciling with you and being renewed from the inside out. We recognize that no political power or physical pressure can cause people to be forgiven and sacrificially loving. That only comes through you. Change me so I can be an instrument of your peace—your power that destroys your enemies by making them your family.