

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you spend the majority of your time thinking about the past, present, or future? Why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

Proverbs 27:12 NIV

You have done many good things for me, LORD, just as you promised. I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge. I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word.

You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees. Arrogant people smear me with lies, but in truth I obey your commandments with all my heart. Their hearts are dull and stupid, but I delight in your instructions.

My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees. Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver. **Psalms 119:65–72 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Direction determines destination.

Life is linear. There is a connection between yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Have you come to the belief that God takes better care of you than you do?

How do you think King David came to be thankful for his suffering? Are you grateful for what the difficulty in your life has accomplished?

Do you see a direct connection between your choices and attitudes yesterday and your situation today? What choices and attitudes will you embrace today for a better tomorrow?

What are you grateful for in your life? What needs to change in your life? How?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, dogs don't have bank accounts or board meetings. You have given me incredible awareness and with it, responsibility. When I was a child, I did not know what tomorrow would bring and I usually made decisions that were enjoyable in the moment. Help me today to be filled with wisdom and healthy self-control so that I can follow your path today for a better tomorrow. Help me discern and choose the direction that will lead me to your preferred destination!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What responsibilities did you have (or do you have) in your early twenties?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. But Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God’s name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Likewise, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful. They followed all the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the LORD that had been consecrated in Jerusalem.

The LORD, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple. But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the LORD’s anger could no longer be restrained and nothing could be done. **2 Chronicles 36:11–16 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

What direction are you headed? Will it take you where you want to go? Make no mistake about it: rebellion isolates you, but it does not insulate you from real consequences.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

How important are the decisions of leaders?

Who did God have compassion for?

At what point could God’s anger “no longer be restrained”?

Who is functionally in control of your decisions? Who influences you to the point of changing your attitudes and choices? Do you submit to God’s guidance? Are you influenced by political sensitivities? Do you decide how you feel based on the nightly news? Are you heavily swayed by the choices and attitudes of family members or friends? Do you forge your own way no matter what?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, may I never contribute to a situation in which leaders influence people so sinfully that “nothing can be done” and your anger can “no longer be restrained.” You are full of justice. I pray that you would show us grace and mercy so that our leaders can have hearts and minds dedicated to you so each of us can influence people towards you and not against you.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are you pleased with your direction, knowing it is leading to a particular destination?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So on January 15, during the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army against Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built siege ramps against its walls. Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah’s reign.

By July 18 in the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign, the famine in the city had become very severe, and the last of the food was entirely gone. Then a section of the city wall was broken down. Since the city was surrounded by the Babylonians, the soldiers waited for nightfall and escaped through the gate between the two walls behind the king’s garden. Then they headed toward the Jordan Valley.

But the Babylonian troops chased the king and overtook him on the plains of Jericho, for his men had all deserted him and scattered. They captured the king and took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where they pronounced judgment upon Zedekiah. They made Zedekiah watch as they slaughtered his sons. Then they gouged out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon. **2 Kings 25:1–7 NLT**

Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. **Galatians 6:7–10 NLT**

Sermon Insight: Eventually you too will face the consequences of your life choices.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Who will benefit if you “live to please the Spirit”?

Who will suffer if you “live only to satisfy (your) own sinful nature”?

Zedekiah led a nation into grievous sin, drove them to the point of starvation, deserted them when they were suffering the consequences of his failed leadership, and led to their exile in a foreign nation. He spent his remaining days captive, tortured, and terrorized. Yet for many years, many happily followed him and participated in his evil ways. How are you careful to discern who is worthy to follow?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me live to please the Spirit and not give up, so at the right time, I can reap a harvest of blessing!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What principles have you intentionally built your life on? Are they working well?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.

“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.” **Matthew 5:1–12 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

God created you pure, innocent, perfect and beautiful. Sin has interrupted your relationship with him. God removed your guilt and put it on Jesus because he wants you back. You get to live a new life through humbly following His Spirit! God provides the presence, power, and peace to live a new life. Are you embracing this opportunity so God can flood you with blessing?

How can you live today so that you can receive God’s “blessings”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for creating me. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Jesus to take away my guilt. Thank you for your Holy Spirit. Thank you for reconciling me to yourself. Thank you for your presence, power, and peace. Thank you that I have a place in Heaven where you are. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and wise living with me. Thank you for allowing me to participate as you reconcile others to yourself. You are so good!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How would you live today if you knew it would be your last on earth?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins. **James 5:16–20 NLT**

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. **Ephesians 6:10–18 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Is there anyone you need you know who is “wandering away from the truth” that you need to help bring back into order to “save from death” and “bring about the forgiveness of many sins”? Who has done that for you?

The “strategies of the devil” are not mysterious. Satan influences people and world systems to come against God through deception and distraction. And according to the Apostle Paul, if you put on the “armor of God,” you will still be standing firm after the battle you face. Review the “Armor of God” – anything missing in your life? What do you need to “put on” today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for teaching us how to have victory in our battle. Equip us for what is to come!