

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Picture yourself *totally free*...where are you at, and how do you feel?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. **Romans 7:14–25**

Sermon Insights: Every one of us has a “flow blocker,” a “signature sin” that keeps us from living in the flow of God's Spirit. To be the best version of me God created, it is all about breaking free and staying free, *in community*.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Is it easier to acknowledge your sin *before* you are saved and are guilt-ridden or *after* you are saved and know you are loved and completely forgiven?

What is your “flow blocker” or “signature sin,” the pattern you turn to when you are struggling?

Carefully identifying the problem is REALLY important. If YOU are the problem, you will think God is against YOU—but that is clearly not true. If SIN is the problem, you will realize God is against SIN and loves and cherishes YOU. God promised to free his children from the POWER of sin—freeing you from things like overpowering guilt and dangerous isolation. How does talking honestly with Christian brothers and sisters help you be freed from the POWER of sin?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for loving me and saving me from the power of sin. Help me to love you with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, for you are the one who gives life!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If joy is your fuel, what does the gauge on your gas tank say today?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

A psalm of David. Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. *Interlude*

Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. *Interlude*

Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. *Interlude*

The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.” Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD. So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure! **Psalm 32:1-11 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Pain is God’s megaphone that maybe you cannot manipulate the circumstances as you thought you could.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What part of David’s journey do you most resonate with?

Why is God’s forgiveness essential to your personal freedom?

Are you praying to God “while there is still time”? Can you say, with David, that God is your hiding place?

How much “encouragement” do you need from God to go down the wise paths?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for being gentle and kind with me. I thank you for the correction I have received. I pray you would forgive my sins and bless me with joy. Father, create in me a pure heart!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How are you most like and most unlike your father?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“But we are descendants of Abraham,” they said. “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free’?”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there’s no room in your hearts for my message. I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father.”

“Our father is Abraham!” they declared.

“No,” Jesus replied, “for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. No, you are imitating your real father.”

They replied, “We aren’t illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father.”

Jesus told them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It’s because you can’t even hear me! For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don’t believe me! Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don’t you believe me? Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don’t listen because you don’t belong to God.” **John 8:31–47 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What were the people confused and deceived about? Why could they not “hear” Jesus?

Was there a time or situation in your life that prevented you from understanding Jesus? What changed?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to have a humble and open mind and heart so I can truly see you!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you believe radical change in someone’s life is possible? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves [The word translated “sinful nature” is the Greek word “sarx” meaning “flesh.” “Flesh” refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.] The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. **Galatians 5:16–26 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

While our physical bodies are not evil, following the “desires” of the “flesh” (“sinful nature”) results in grave evil. So we do not look at the spirit as good and the body as bad; we look at the Holy Spirit directing our bodies to bring both into harmony with God’s will.

How have you seen God change your life from bad results to the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Do you belong to Jesus? If so, what is now true of you? How will you live in that freedom today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for making us your sons and daughters, not slaves. Thank you for forgiving my sin and making me a permanent part of your family! Help me live by the Spirit!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

John Ortberg writes, “Nothing makes temptation more powerful than isolation.” Thoughts?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. **Psalms 139:23–24 NLT**

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. **1 John 1:5–10 NLT**

Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

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 5:13–20 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

In a world full of people who are accused of offending and worried about being offended...have you ever made it a matter of prayer to carefully consider what offends God? Who needs you to bring them back from “wandering” and will be eternally grateful to you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are light; reveal in me what offends you so that I can come fully into the light!