

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How would you describe your attitude towards your obstacles in life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.”

Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

“The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” **John 10:1–18 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Are you living in alignment with Jesus’ purpose for your life—a rich and satisfying life?

What is an example of sacrificing yourself for others that produces a “rich and satisfying life”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, please shepherd me. Guide my heart, my mind, my impulses. Help me live in alignment with your will!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Pastor Greg said, “A rich and rewarding life is a life that is abounding—overflowing—to the world around us.” What are your thoughts about that definition of a rich, satisfying life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD! Praise him, you who serve the LORD, you who serve in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; celebrate his lovely name with music. For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his own special treasure.

I know the greatness of the LORD— that our Lord is greater than any other god. The LORD does whatever pleases him throughout all heaven and earth, and on the seas and in their depths. He causes the clouds to rise over the whole earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from his storehouses.

He destroyed the firstborn in each Egyptian home, both people and animals. He performed miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt against Pharaoh and all his people. He struck down great nations and slaughtered mighty kings—Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan. He gave their land as an inheritance, a special possession to his people Israel.

Your name, O LORD, endures forever; your fame, O LORD, is known to every generation. For the LORD will give justice to his people and have compassion on his servants.

The idols of the nations are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, and mouths but cannot breathe. And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

O Israel, praise the LORD! O priests—descendants of Aaron—praise the LORD! O Levites, praise the LORD! All you who fear the LORD, praise the LORD! The LORD be praised from Zion, for he lives here in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD! **Psalm 135:1–21 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Who—or what—do you regularly celebrate and spend time, energy and money on? Are you “worshipping” God or idols?

“...those who make idols are just like them...” How do people reflect who they worship?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me trust in you, your power, and your ways. Forgive me for the times I have looked for love and purpose outside of you and your plan.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your biggest hope?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. **1 Corinthians 15:45–58 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why is Christianity SO much different than “do your best to become a good person”?

Do you spend your time, energy, and money on things that will last for eternity?

How is God giving you victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for coming from Heaven to give me life and save me from the power of sin that leads to death. Help me overflow...abound...spill over...with your love to all I meet today!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite fruit? Would you recognize the tree, bush or vine it grows on?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other. **John 15:1–17 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Pastor Greg described the difference between “hurried” and “busy.” Dallas Willard identified “hurry” as an enemy of our souls, a condition of unrest that reduces our impact and increases our stress. Jesus was often “busy” but wasn’t “hurried” at an unhealthy inner pace even as he did many things. Are you living Jesus’ rhythm of hard work AND rest, of peace AND strength in the middle of your “busyness”?

Jesus is the “vine,” Christians are the “branches.” How do we “bear fruit”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for being the faithful life-giver. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be filled with your endless love and overwhelming joy. Help me truly trust you and love others.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you prefer to be a “big picture” thinker, or do you prefer to focus on the details?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. **Colossians 3:1–17 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Pastor Greg encouraged us to set our minds on things above: beyond the obstacle, beyond the problem, beyond the person—to the one who is ABLE, who understands the pain, who identifies with us and enables us to live in such a way that our lives glorify him. How does that free us from the worry, stress, and anxiety of focusing on our obstacles?

How does this Scripture help you refocus on God, yourself, and others?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for giving me the opportunity to lose focus on my obstacles and regain focus on you, your faithfulness, and your good, pleasing and perfect will!