

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What group of people do you believe need “mercy” more than anyone else?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

One day Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Take these people up to the Promised Land.’ But you haven’t told me whom you will send with me. You have told me, ‘I know you by name, and I look favorably on you.’ If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people.”

The LORD replied, “I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.” Then Moses said, “If you don’t personally go with us, don’t make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don’t go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth.” The LORD replied to Moses, “I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name.” Moses responded, “Then show me your glorious presence.”

The LORD replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.” The LORD continued, “Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.” **Exodus 33:12–23 NLT**

Sermon Insights: A critical part of God’s glory is God’s mercy. God is “slow to anger.” Wrath is God’s righteous response to evil, but it is not his heart.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of judgment, especially God’s extreme and final judgment against sin. Something we should consider: Jesus participated in human suffering and suffered the weight of God’s judgment for our sin—something that was unimaginably difficult for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Does your attitude towards God reflect appreciation and compassion or harsh judgment? Do you trust God to be the wise, righteous, and merciful judge that He shows himself to be through the Scriptures?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to trust your judgment instead of mine. Teach me to respond to your mercy with utter thankfulness and willingness to share that incredible gift with others! You are so good...please continue to shine your mercy to this world IN and THROUGH me!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What do you love most about God? What do you fear most about God?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Then the LORD told Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed. Be ready in the morning to climb up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain. No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is to appear anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain.”

So Moses chiseled out two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. Then the LORD came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out,

“Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.”

Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped. And he said, “O Lord, if it is true that I have found favor with you, then please travel with us. Yes, this is a stubborn and rebellious people, but please forgive our iniquity and our sins. Claim us as your own special possession.” **Exodus 34:1–9 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Receiving God’s mercy requires humility—an awareness of your need to receive something better than you deserve. Why is embracing sin antithetical to receiving mercy?

What is the difference between temptation and the choice to actively engage in sin?

Have you grieved your sin, asked for forgiveness, and drawn close to the God of mercy?

Have you shown the same open-hearted forgiveness towards others that God has shown you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for being a God of compassion and mercy. Thank you that you are slow to anger and WANT to forgive. Teach us to guard our hearts against evil so we can enjoy fellowship with you and walk your paths of peace and blessing!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could fix one problem throughout the entire world, what would it be and why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail.” Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her. **Luke 1:26–38 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What does it take to find “favor” with the world? What does it take to find “favor” with God?

Which set of the above characteristics are you pursuing passionately in your life?

How does God show mercy to Mary?

How does God show mercy to the world?

How does God show mercy to you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, your wisdom and your ways are untraceable and unfathomable to me. Thank you for showing your glory through mercy and compassion. Thank you for honoring Mary and blessing the world through a young woman who, full of faith, had found favor in your eyes. Thank you for seeing clearly, not as the world sees. Teach me to see people today with eyes of faith.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What do you like most about the Christmas season? What do you dislike the most about it?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

Mary responded, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.

“His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.” **Luke 1:39–55 NLT**

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” **Matthew 1:22–23 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

How does Mary describe God’s heart and mercy?

The gift of God to Mary and the world would involve a conspicuous unmarried pregnancy that would threaten to alienate her from her family, friends and community—and almost from her fiancé and foreseeable future. God’s plan was shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. Yet Mary obeyed gratefully and faithfully. In what area of **your** life do you need more trust in God despite the uncertainty of the future?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are good all the time, even when I cannot see or understand what you do, or when, or why. You are also good when bad things happen that are against your expressly stated instructions, desire, and will. I pray, as Jesus taught, that your will would be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Help me to embrace you in faith every day on my way to my true home.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who is your best friend? Does that person help you draw closer to Jesus?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, “Look at us!” The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”

Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon’s Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. “People of Israel,” he said, “what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate’s decision to release him. You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

Acts 3:1–15 NLT

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

When Jesus enables a miracle, what mercy of God is he really inviting everyone to experience?

Do you remember when you actively rejected Jesus? What changed? How does your experience of receiving mercy help you approach others mercifully (who also don’t deserve it)?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you do not show mercy by accident or because of weakness. You show mercy with utter intentionality and strength. You have every right to separate us from yourself based on our sinful attitudes and actions, yet you sent Jesus so you could cleanse us and bring us blameless into your presence. Thank you for your mercy!!!