

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

As a child, how were you taught to respond to your desires? Was that positive or negative?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. **James 4:1–10 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Can you resonate with the people James was describing at one point in your life? How?

Do you desire to bring your desires under the Lordship of Jesus?

Consider your attitude...right now...towards God. Are you being humble and coming close to God? Are you resisting the devil so that he will flee from you?

Is there any “friendship with the world” you need to be sorrowful for? Anything you genuinely need to repent of?

Isn't it amazing that if you give your heart to God, as it is, he will help it grow into something more blessed and life-giving?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are SO good! Not only do you allow me to see the foolishness of my past attitudes and actions, you graciously give me a new day and a new heart to pursue love, life, and real freedom. I humble myself before you...I quietly come close to you in gratitude...please come close to me and lift me up in honor.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who in your life is genuinely kind with their words? Are you attracted to that?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?

Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.” Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you. **James 4:11–5:6 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What relationship do you need to be more humble in?

How did you need to honor God in your plans today?

The Bible teaches that everything we have is God's, and we are the managers of it. How does that change your perspective on using the money God has put, for a time, in your hands?

Are you in danger of being judged for your misuse of money and mistreatment of people?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, open my heart to following you in these very important areas of life—my relationships, my plans, and the money you have let me use for a short time. Teach me humility, wisdom, and above all, how to love selflessly and generously like you!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Why is patience so difficult?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!

For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.

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.

James 5:7–15 NLT

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What are your personal top three reasons for longing for Jesus’ return? Is there anything holding you back from this essential Christian attitude?

Who has been a good example to you of patience in suffering?

Another word used in the past for “patience” was “long-suffering.” How can we do this with joy as Christians?

Rather than suggesting that certain feelings are off-limits for the Christian, James gives us a range of expected experiences (suffering, happy, sick) and suggests appropriate responses. Which do you need today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for providing for my weaknesses and caring for me in my need. I don’t like to be vulnerable, but I am. Teach me to be honest and trust you and the trustworthy people you have put in my life. I long for you to return—please come soon!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When you picture God, do you see “angry judge” or “tender healer”?

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**

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.

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. **1 John 1:5–2:2 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why is the prayer of righteous people powerful?

Sin is like sickness...we never embrace it as optimal, but we recognize that, as humans, it is sadly inevitable. And just like sickness untreated can lead to death, the power of sin CAN lead to death. How does God teach us to heal and recover from the sickening dangers of sin?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, I have something I need to confess...not because you don't already know, but I need to hear myself say the truth about this situation and trust your mercy instead of my own inner voice of fear, regret, denial, and shame. Here it is... Please forgive me...

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If everyone in your life treated you as you treat them, would you have a better or worse life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Jesus said, “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. **Matthew 7:1–14 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Based on these words of Jesus, what is your personal responsibility TODAY in your:

- Actions?
- Attitudes?
- Relationships?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, the purpose of life is to be filled with your Holy Spirit so that I can be a new creation empowered to join with other forgiven sinners to be the physical body of Christ on earth. May your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven! (For the Lord’s Prayer, see Matthew 6!)