

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When do motives matter?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Jesus said, “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity!

“I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!” **Matthew 6:1–8 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you feel like you have to impress God or other people when you pray? What does Jesus say?

What is the godly motivation for giving and praying?

Why are motives so important to God?

Do you look forward to the rewards your Father in Heaven will give you if you pursue his righteousness with the humility Jesus teaches?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, my heart is full of many things, some good and some bad. Some enriching, some downright ugly. At times, I have what I believe are good motives. At times, I know I’m just doing the right thing to get noticed. Thank you for calling me to a better standard of living. Teach me to humbly, quietly serve you and others...not to be praised or noticed by people, but to be praised and noticed by you. Everything you give me is a gift; help me to fear you in a way that helps me see you clearly. Help me to draw close to you so that you will, as you promised, draw close to me!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What role does prayer play in your communication with God?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

Pray like this:

“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” **Matthew 6:7–18 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! How does this affect how you pray?

In the Lord’s Prayer is a list of the most simple and yet most profound things you can ask God. Looking at the list, which is the one that is the easiest to pray (and why)? Which is the most difficult to pray (and why)?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.”

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What childlike attitude do you need more of in your life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

“Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments.”

“Which ones?” the man asked.

And Jesus replied: “ ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

“I’ve obeyed all these commandments,” the young man replied.

“What else must I do?”

Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. **Matthew 19:13–22 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do any worries, cares, or possessions choke out your childlike trust in Jesus?

In small ways, we are invited to make the same choice EVERY DAY. Do you catch up on worrisome headlines about the economy and neglect praying to your Father who cares for you? Do you spend time working for the extra paycheck and leave the people you love most wanting more of you and your time? What will make you happy IN THE END—and what small decision of progress will you make today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, I often snack on M&M’s and lose my appetite for steak. Help me not follow the path of the rich young ruler who chose his possessions, went away sad, and missed life with Jesus.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you dream about what you would do if you won the lottery? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

Then Peter said to him, “We’ve given up everything to follow you. What will we get?”

Jesus replied, “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.” **Matthew 19:23–30 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Many during Jesus’ time believed that wealth was the sign of God’s blessing and favor and that the rich were closer to God. For Jesus to say that wealth presents a dangerous stumbling block to salvation was a scary thought. The thought might go something like this: “If it is hard for God’s *favorite* people, what hope do I have?” Jesus has just taught them that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, you must become like a child—trusting, dependent, *needy*. How about you—are you trusting, dependent, and *needy*? Or do you have some things in your life that are distracting and pulling you back from being “all in”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are worthy of any sacrifice I am asked to make. Help me not to be so satisfied in this world that I miss eternal life.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you generally believe you deserve more out of life or less out of life than you get?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

“For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

“At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o’clock he did the same thing.

“At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’ They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’ The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

“That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. When those hired at five o’clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage. When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage. When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’

“He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’

“So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.” **Matthew 20:1–16 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

When are you tempted to say, “It’s not fair”?

Do you like how this Scripture represents God (the owner)? Why or why not?

How has Jesus challenged your view of your own importance?

How do you expect to be treated at home? How do you act if you are disappointed?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, it is my privilege to serve you. You have given me life, freedom, and opportunity. Please forgive me for the times I arrogantly treat you and others as though I deserve more. Teach me to humble myself so I can joyfully walk with you and be a blessing to others.