

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

What do you feel is truly secure no matter what?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the LORD. LORD, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea! Don't turn away from me in my time of distress. Bend down to listen, and answer me quickly when I call to you. For my days disappear like smoke, and my bones burn like red-hot coals. My heart is sick, withered like grass, and I have lost my appetite.

Because of my groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones. I am like an owl in the desert, like a little owl in a far-off wilderness. I lie awake, lonely as a solitary bird on the roof. My enemies taunt me day after day. They mock and curse me. I eat ashes for food. My tears run down into my drink because of your anger and wrath. For you have picked me up and thrown me out. My life passes as swiftly as the evening shadows. I am withering away like grass.

But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne forever. Your fame will endure to every generation. You will arise and have mercy on Jerusalem— and now is the time to pity her, now is the time you promised to help. For your people love every stone in her walls and cherish even the dust in her streets. Then the nations will tremble before the LORD. The kings of the earth will tremble before his glory. For the LORD will rebuild Jerusalem. He will appear in his glory. He will listen to the prayers of the destitute. He will not reject their pleas. Let this be recorded for future generations, so that a people not yet born will praise the LORD. Tell them the LORD looked down from his heavenly sanctuary. He looked down to earth from heaven to hear the groans of the prisoners, to release those condemned to die. And so the LORD's fame will be celebrated in Zion, his praises in Jerusalem, when multitudes gather together and kingdoms come to worship the LORD.

He broke my strength in midlife, cutting short my days. But I cried to him, "O my God, who lives forever, don't take my life while I am so young! Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. They will perish, but you remain forever; they will wear out like old clothing. You will change them like a garment and discard them. But you are always the same; you will live forever. The children of your people will live in security. Their children's children will thrive in your presence." **Psalm 102:1-28 NLT**

"I am the LORD, and I do not change. **Malachi 3:6 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What does this Scripture remind you of regarding yourself...and what does it remind you of regarding God?

As you grow older, how has your understanding of God changed?

Are you more or less trusting now than when you were younger?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, as I grow and change, you never change. Help my trust in you to grow, even as I simultaneously age and grow more childlike under your care. Thank you for your plan, protection, provision, presence, and purpose in my life!

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Where do you look for wisdom?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements.

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. **James 1:2–18 NLT**

Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. **Hebrews 13:7–9 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Considering troubles as an opportunity for great joy only makes sense if *WHO* provides for and protects you?

Are you asking God for wisdom with an undivided heart?

Based on the money you have at your disposal, has God "honored" you or "humbled you?"

"Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith." How will you do this today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for choosing to "give birth to us by giving us [your] true word." Thank you for making us your "prized possession"!

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who do you believe sets the standard for real justice?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation. All of your works will thank you, LORD, and your faithful followers will praise you. They will speak of the glory of your kingdom; they will give examples of your power. They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign. For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations.

The LORD always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does. The LORD helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads. The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it. When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness. The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth. He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them.

The LORD protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked. I will praise the LORD, and may everyone on earth bless his holy name forever and ever. **Psalm 145:8-21 NLT**

When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims. Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

"Come now, let's settle this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. If you will only obey me, you will have plenty to eat. But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!" **Isaiah 1:15-20 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What do these Scriptures reveal about God's character and interaction with humans?

While God's nature does not change, does God respond differently to people based on their choices?

What kind of "fear" do you believe is good for humble believers to have towards God?

Which has been your path—the path of humility and righteousness or the path of pain and difficulty? Do you see the kindness of God in both and his willingness to restore anyone who repents?

Is there anything in your life you need to confess (say the same thing as God) and repent (turn to God) so you can be restored (healed by God)?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to fear you like the disciples on the boat in the storm. They feared the storm's ability to kill them until Jesus calmed the storm. Then they had someone greater to fear—who loved them!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Is there a vehicle from your past you really wish you still owned?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."

At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

"I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. **Genesis 17:1-9 NLT**

But Moses protested again, "What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The LORD never appeared to you?'" Then the LORD asked him, "What is that in your hand?" "A shepherd's staff," Moses replied. "Throw it down on the ground," the LORD told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back. Then the LORD told him, "Reach out and grab its tail." So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd's staff in his hand. "Perform this sign," the LORD told him. "Then they will believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you." **Exodus 4:1-5 NLT**

Sermon Insights: If we as a church are going to remain faithful to God to make any significant impact in our community and the world, God is calling us to do these three things: lay down our identity, our income and our influence.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Pastor Greg likes to say, "God loves to do extraordinary things through ordinary people." Consider the age of Abraham...and the difficult past of Moses...now consider the POWER of our God. What does God want to do IN and THROUGH you?

How is God calling you to lay down your identity, income, and influence so that he can pick it up and use it for much greater purpose than your own personal benefit?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are my shepherd. I will fear no evil, because you are with me.

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

How does it make you feel when you want to help someone and cannot? Who do you blame and why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well.

Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?"

"You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible." **Matthew 17:14–20 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

God's character never changes.

God's power never changes.

God's hatred for sin never changes.

God's forgiveness never changes.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What do you like most about God's character?

Do you believe "God is in control"? What do you mean by that?

Do you pray for a pure heart and a clean mind so that you can also hate the sin that God hates?

Do you genuinely trust God's forgiveness—for YOU? On what basis does God forgive you—Jesus' payment or your spiritual performance?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me to live happily out of the abundance of mercy and grace you have given to me freely, not out of fear of being punished. Help me to keep my eyes on Jesus, who took MY guilt and shouldered MY shame. Thank you for not holding my sins against me but forgiving me so that you can legally declare and see me as completely pure, holy, blameless, and without a single fault. Thank you for living with me through the presence of your Holy Spirit.