

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When do you sing the loudest—when you are with people or when you are alone?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

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.

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites.

Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven.

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. **Colossians 3:16–4:6 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why are you motivated to obey—out of fear of punishment or out of pleasure from living forgiven?

When is fear appropriate? When is fear inappropriate?

What does it mean, “God has no favorites”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you care about me personally and call me to obey out of a thankful heart and a confidence that comes with being forgiven. Help me to grow in trust and obedience!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could be convinced that you were 100% forgiven in God’s eyes—past, present, and future—how would you live?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body.

As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. **Ephesians 5:21–33 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Where do you look for setting your expectations for roles in marriage—your feelings? Culture? Friends? Religious leaders? Recognized “professionals”? God (the creator of the relationship)? A blend?

How does Jesus and the church affect how you approach marriage?

Why are both love and respect essential to honor God in marriage?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for loving us and giving yourself up for us so that we can be free of the power of sin that leads to death. Thank you for loving us and forgiving us so that we truly can be “holy and without fault.” I choose to see myself (and my church) as YOU say we are. Help me to “live forgiven” and look at myself the way you look at me.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What makes you “strong”? How do you define “strength”?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites. **Ephesians 6:1–9 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you think it is significant that God gave instructions 1) to the “least of these” in society’s eyes (children and slaves), 2) *first* before their respective authorities (fathers and masters)?

What does it say about Jesus and his body, the church, that children and slaves were regarded as important (in a world that would have considered them lowly and expendable)?

Does God encourage you to see yourself as an oppressed victim or as empowered and responsible for your attitudes and actions *NO MATTER WHAT*?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for calling me to trust and obey through my personal circumstances. Thank you that you have not weakened me by calling me a victim but have empowered me to take responsibility for my attitudes and actions. Thank you for not “playing favorites” like the world does. Help me to assess people through your eyes and values, not the world’s limited valuation system.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How do you know what is true?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God’s mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God’s ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should. **Ephesians 6:10–20 NLT**

You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don’t drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God’s servant to proclaim it. **Colossians 1:21–23 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

How do you know what is true?

“Righteousness” is aligning with God’s values. How does grace and forgiveness help you choose good? How does rule-following and “trying harder” sabotage someone’s best efforts to become righteous?

Do you see a correlation between any of the “armor of God” and Colossians 1:21-23?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me “suit up” and recognize my true enemies so I can love and forgive as you do!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are you becoming a leader?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position.” So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?

A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil’s trap.

In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons.

In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.

A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus. **1 Timothy 3:1–13 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why is it important for a church leader to manage his own household well?

Why is it dangerous for a new believer to become a church leader?

Has your confidence in your faith in Christ Jesus grown over time? Why or why not?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, increase my faith. Help me grow in my capacity for leadership and influence. Please bless, lead, protect, and healthily challenge all church leaders. Help church leaders and specialized servants/deacons to be strong, humble, and effective in bringing you glory!