

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you generally feel like God wants more FROM you or more FOR you?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn’t repented of their sins and turned to God. “What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.

“And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead. For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today. I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you.”

At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way! “My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” **Matthew 11:20-30 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

“Corrie ten Boom once said that if the devil can't make you sin, he'll make you busy. There's truth in that. Both sin and busyness have the exact same effect—they cut off your connection to God, to other people, and even to your own soul.” *John Mark Comer in “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry”*

Consider your current rhythm of work and rest:

- 1) Who encouraged you to set your current pace?
- 2) Would Jesus say that you are “weary and carry heavy burdens”?
- 3) Do you believe God is “humble and gentle at heart” and wants you to rest?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, sometimes I am afraid to trust your ways and receive your gifts. I am afraid if I “let go,” I’ll lose control, and I have very bad memories of being made to feel powerless before. Help me to believe that you will take better care of me than I can take care of myself!

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

Have you been impacted by people with bad attitudes and extra rules? Is Jesus like that?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

NOTE: Many Jews had difficulty stomaching freedom in Christ available for everyone because of the superiority that they felt through their religious traditions and rituals. A strong temptation for the Jewish religious leaders was to say, “Fine...follow Jesus AND keep our traditions.” Paul, likely the most educated and faithful Jew, argued for faith in Jesus ONLY.

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires. **Colossians 2:9–23 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you spiritually “work” out of a place of rest? Do you follow Jesus out of peace with God, or do you follow Jesus out of fear of punishment? Which honors God?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for looking at me through the blood of Jesus and forgiving my sin! Help me not to take refuge in extra rules (or leaders who promote them) out of a sense of duty and fear.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you prefer a tame and uneventful life or a life of experience and adventure?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. All power to him forever! Amen. **1 Peter 5:1–11 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Are you motivated to serve Jesus faithfully for the glory and honor you will receive when he returns?

Who in your life has served quietly and faithfully, unknown to most of the world, and will be greatly honored when Jesus returns?

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” Is there a connection in your life between 1) humbling yourself, and 2) giving your cares and worries over to God?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, when I trust me more than you, I try to take control. Teach me to trust your ways and timing. Help me through the trials you are going to allow me to face so I can be mature and full of joy!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you believe you can cut yourself off from Christ and fall away from grace? How?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole law of Moses. For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you.

Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why am I still being persecuted? If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended. I just wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. **Galatians 5:1–15 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Some are tempted to use their freedom in Christ to go back to bad attitudes and extra rules. Why do you think that is? Comfort in clear rules over ambiguity of faith? Superiority through spiritual competition? Fear of the cross of Jesus Christ not being sufficient?

Some are tempted to use their freedom in Christ to live sinfully. What should we use our freedom for instead?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are so good to me. Thank you for giving me freedom and the power to use it to serve others in love! Teach me to walk healthily in rhythms of freedom!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What would you serve if you knew Jesus and his friends were coming over for dinner?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever. **Psalms 23:1-6 NLT**

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing.

She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.”

But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” Jesus said, “This is how you should pray: “Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. Give us each day the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation.” **Luke 10:38–11:4 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Two “principles of interpretation” to help with Scripture interpretation are “context” (what is immediately before and after the Scripture) and “parallel passages” (other Scriptures that are connected topically and help develop our understanding).

What insight do you get from this context: Luke put what Mary discovered alongside Jesus’ simple instructions of “how to pray”? Neither are complicated or complex...

What insights do you get from comparing the “parallel passages” of Psalms 23 and Luke 10?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for being my Good Shepherd and providing for all my needs!