

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you typically plan too much or too little for the future?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies.

While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it’s not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. For we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. **2 Corinthians 5:1–10 NLT**

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. **Colossians 1:11–14 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you imagine and look forward to your eternal heavenly body?

Does the God who is good, compassionate, and merciful have your full loyalty?

If you are a Christian, dead to yourself and alive in Jesus, how does knowing that you are forgiven affect how you approach your life?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, my heart is torn between participating in your work here on earth and being with you in Heaven. Keep my heart and mind safe in you as I continue my journey home. Help me be strengthened with all your glorious power so I will have the endurance and patience I need!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is something you are grateful someone talked you into? Did you resist at first?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The Apostle Paul wrote: Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. Either way, Christ’s love controls us.

Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:11–21 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Paul was compelled to do anything short of sinning to help people find reconciliation with God through Jesus. Are you passionate about helping people find their way back to God? Who will thank you for being a part of their journey when you get to Heaven?

Has faith changed your point of view towards humans?

Paul describes the opportunity to participate in helping people find life through Jesus as a “gift from God.” How does this help keep Christians filled with gratitude instead of selfish pride?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for offering me reconciliation with you through the physical death of your Son. Thank you for giving me the gift of participating in your work to help others find forgiveness, security and reconciliation in you.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you like more rules or less rules? Are you, by nature, a rule-follower or a rule-breaker?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

The Apostle Paul wrote: But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?”

“You and I are Jews by birth, not ‘sinners’ like the Gentiles. Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.”

But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

Galatians 2:11–21 NLT

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you ever follow rules not because you think they are right but because you fear the reactions of other people?

How has the grace of God affected your life?

Why did Paul say, “I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me not treat your grace as meaningless and act as though I can, through my own good works and intentions, earn your approval. I come to you “poor in spirit,” fully needing you every day.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are you grateful for your “marital status” at this time in your life? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command.

But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another. So I say to those who aren’t married and to widows—it’s better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry than to burn with lust. But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife. **1 Corinthians 7:1–11 NLT**

I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord’s work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible. **1 Corinthians 7:32–35 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you believe Jesus knows more about you than you know about yourself, and Jesus takes better care of you than you take care of yourself? These beliefs form the basis upon which difficult obedience displays great faith. If you follow a trustworthy Father, you will get the benefit of his perspective. What are you looking to God for guidance in your life right now? How would you describe Paul’s heart for people as he carefully shares Jesus’ commands?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you take better care of me than I take care of myself. Teach me to trust and obey!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How have you noticed that people are similar in giftings and struggles throughout time?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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 5:15–33 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Does it surprise you that believers were struggling with the SAME THINGS two thousand years ago and that Paul's words are timeless?

If you are a married believer, how does Jesus' example impact how you live out your marriage role and relationship?

Why is it important that the starting point for any Christian relationship begins with mutual submission out of reverence for Christ?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for allowing broken, sinful people to be forgiven and become a part of the church, Jesus' bride. Thank you for giving yourself up for us to make us holy!