

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could sing like anyone, living or dead, who would you choose to sing like?

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

How are you using your voice—do people hear Jesus’ message and kindness through you?

Have you experienced a huge shift in how you see people—through Jesus’ eyes?

God has given you a unique voice in the task of reconciling people to him. Who needs to hear your voice today? Why is YOUR voice uniquely important?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you are amazing! Thank you for being “in Christ” reconciling the world to yourself, no longer counting our sins against us. Teach me to be confident in you and humble about me so I can display your goodness in my relationships today.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What gift have you been given that meant the most to you?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. **Romans 12:1–8 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

You are unique and loved because of the value placed on you by your Creator, not because of your family of origin, nationality, or coffee preference. Do you think it is significant that God calls everyone to individual, personal responsibility?

Everyone has a special function in the body of Christ. If we can live out love (patience, kindness, no boasting or envy), then we can use our gifts powerfully while enhancing and celebrating others. How would a family, church, and community look if we followed Jesus in this?

While we have individual worth, power, and responsibility, we are called to use it for the benefit of others—we “belong to” each other. Truly strong individuals voluntarily create a healthy community. How does God want you to be strong individually and strong in a community today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for making me secure/loved AND significant/important. Help me to boldly live out both today!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Is it hard for you to trust yourself? God? Other people?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Scripture continued from yesterday: Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD. Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. **Romans 12:9–21 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Read through the Scripture again:

- What commands lead you to reorient yourself around the truth (and potentially deny your preferences or the preferences of the people you are loving)?
- What commands lead you to reorient yourself around the preferences and sensitivities of the people you are loving?
- How are both truth AND grace important?

What is God's role in justice? What is your role?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for loving and forgiving me, and not pouring out on me the judgment my sin deserves. Help me *really* love others and leave the judgment and vengeance up to you. Please protect me so that I am not conquered by evil; help me conquer evil by doing good!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite part of God’s creation?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.

This includes you who were once far away from God. 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 1:15–23 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Jesus was “God in a body.” The Apostle Paul wrote, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.” How has learning about Jesus (who he loved, all he did, what he said) helped you understand God better?

What are you most grateful to God for?

Do you see yourself through the eyes of God?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for allowing me to have life through Jesus! Thank you for reconciling with me through the death of Jesus. Thank you for bringing me into your presence and declaring me holy, blameless, and without a single fault!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Have you ever kept a really good secret?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church. God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God’s people. For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.

So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.

I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. **Colossians 1:24–2:7 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

How do you think God’s people in the Old Testament would have responded to this stunning revelation? “And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.”

Consider the ways this passage makes much of Jesus.

Why is it essential that your faith be solidly rooted in the truth of Jesus?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, let my roots grow down into Jesus, and let my life be built on him. Then my faith will grow strong in the truth I have been taught, and I will overflow with thankfulness!