

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who is someone you looked up to as a child that you do not as an adult?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, “Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”

Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. You hypocrites!

Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’”

Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.” Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?” Jesus replied, “Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.” **Matthew 15:1-14 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What is an example of a human tradition that was presented to you as a “rule” from God? Were you surprised when you learned the truth?

In a world where rule-followers can also be very hypocritical and far from God, how are you going to ensure that your heart stays close to God?

Are you honoring God in your family responsibilities?

Are there any cultural voices that you need to learn to ignore (“the blind leading the blind”)?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to weigh the voices I listen to carefully, discerning what is true and false through your Holy Spirit. Help me only speak words of truth in love.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are you careful with the words you speak? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

**Continued from yesterday’s Scripture:** Then Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable that says people aren’t defiled by what they eat.”

“Don’t you understand yet?” Jesus asked. “Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.”

But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. “Tell her to go away,” they said. “She is bothering us with all her begging.”

Then Jesus said to the woman, “I was sent only to help God’s lost sheep—the people of Israel.” But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, “Lord, help me!” Jesus responded, “It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.”

She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters’ table.”

“Dear woman,” Jesus said to her, “your faith is great. Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed. **Matthew 15:15-28 NLT**

Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **Matthew 22:37-39 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

If your soul is the eternal, fragile, vulnerable, needy part of you (made to always need God), and your mind is your capacity for reason and thought, your heart might be said to comprise your will, drive, energy and capacity for decisions. Why is it important that your “heart” be brought into a place of surrender before Jesus?

Rather than being unkind or uncaring, it appears Jesus was waiting for a display of faith to reward. How does this help you understand God’s heart and will for you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me to be healed and whole so I can love and serve you with my whole being!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

If God provided all you asked for, what would change in the world?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

**Continued from yesterday’s Scripture:** Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee and climbed a hill and sat down. A vast crowd brought to him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn’t speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and he healed them all. The crowd was amazed! Those who hadn’t been able to speak were talking, the crippled were made well, the lame were walking, and the blind could see again! And they praised the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called his disciples and told them, “I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, or they will faint along the way.”

The disciples replied, “Where would we get enough food here in the wilderness for such a huge crowd?” Jesus asked, “How much bread do you have?” They replied, “Seven loaves, and a few small fish.”

So Jesus told all the people to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to the disciples, who distributed the food to the crowd.

They all ate as much as they wanted. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven large baskets of leftover food. There were 4,000 men who were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children. Then Jesus sent the people home, and he got into a boat and crossed over to the region of Magadan. **Matthew 15:29-39 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

It’s important that we be aware of what Jesus provides, and *why*. Why did Jesus provide healing? Why did he provide food? Was that his ultimate mission?

“They all ate as much as they wanted.” When was the last time you were genuinely satisfied with something God provided?

Are you praying for things that are simple and temporary, or are you asking the God of Heaven to change the course of people’s lives for eternity?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Consider praying for the people groups who do not yet have the Bible in their own language, for government officials to make wise decisions, for friends and family and neighbors to be reconciled to God, and for you yourself to experience peace.

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you believe you “deserve” to be treated a specific way? Why or why not?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. So watch yourselves!

“If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.”

The apostles said to the Lord, “Show us how to increase our faith.”

The Lord answered, “If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you!

“When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, ‘Come in and eat with me’? No, he says, ‘Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.’ And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. In the same way, when you obey me you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.’” **Luke 17:1–10 NLT**

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” **Matthew 6:14-15 NLT**

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Are you watching yourself to make absolutely sure you do not tempt others to sin?

Why do you think Jesus taught his disciples to forgive generously and repeatedly?

Consider this: when Jesus told the disciples to forgive, they asked for more faith. His response? Forgiveness requires a little bit of faith and a lot of humility. Who do you need to forgive from your heart? CAREFUL—your duty to forgive comes from the fact that Jesus is your master, not the person you are choosing to forgive. When you forgive, Jesus teaches you to say to him prayerfully, “I am an unworthy servant who has simply done my duty.”

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, please remind me who I need to forgive. Help me to have enough faith and humility to see myself as someone who has been given forgiveness freely and undeservedly so I can share that gift with others.

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

What makes you the most tired?

**SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION**

**A psalm of Asaph.** Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure. But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone. For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness. They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong. They don't have troubles like other people; they're not plagued with problems like everyone else. They wear pride like a jeweled necklace and clothe themselves with cruelty.

These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for! They scoff and speak only evil; in their pride they seek to crush others. They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut throughout the earth. And so the people are dismayed and confused, drinking in all their words. “What does God know?” they ask. “Does the Most High even know what’s happening?” Look at these wicked people— enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.

Did I keep my heart pure for nothing? Did I keep myself innocent for no reason? I get nothing but trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain. If I had really spoken this way to others, I would have been a traitor to your people. So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked. Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction. In an instant they are destroyed, completely swept away by terrors. When you arise, O Lord, you will laugh at their silly ideas as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.

Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. I was so foolish and ignorant— I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

Those who desert him will perish, for you destroy those who abandon you. But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do. **Psalm 73:1-28 NLT**

**APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS**

Has this Psalm helped you regain a sense of God's purpose for your life?

**PRAYER SUGGESTIONS**

Lord, help me be secure in you and wait patiently for your blessings in my life!