

## Day 1 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

**Conversation Starter**

How about you...are you happy?

**Scripture Observation (5 minutes)****Scripture:**

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matthew 5:1-5 NLT**

“I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.”

Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” **John 10:1-10 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

Here is the truth: God wants you to be happy! Seriously, God created you for happiness (that’s what “blessed” means!). That’s why human beings are best when they are happy!

In this series, we will learn how to be the very best version of ourselves and find the steps that lead to *lasting happiness*.

Lasting happiness does not come about because of you, me, politicians or the economy. It is God who does the transforming, but only to the extent that we cooperate!

**Application Suggestions (5 minutes)**

How would you define the “happiness” that Jesus wants you to enjoy?

Are you surprised that the first mark of happiness is being “poor and realizing your need for him”? Why do you think this is the first step?

From the overtly Christian “Celebrate Recovery” to the biblically-derived 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, every “12 Step program” starts with this same principle: recognizing our own poverty instead of our power. Do you think it is a coincidence that Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount began with this principle? Why or why not?

Have you considered that your lack of happiness might be directly connected to your desire to fix, manage, and control your own life or the lives of others? Read Jesus’ words again...what is your next step of surrender?

**Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)**

Lord, it is impossible for me to know how much you love me. The love I can see is overwhelming. Thank you for sacrificing so that I can be truly happy. Help me not settle for fake happiness—help me see you clearly so I can experience the real thing!

## Day 2 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

### Conversation Starter

What are you most sad about in our world today?

### Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

#### Scripture:

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who **mourn**, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matthew 5:1-5 NLT**

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **2 Peter 1:3-11 NLT**

#### Sermon Insights:

When we recognize we are spiritually inadequate, it is overwhelming. We see how we’ve lived out of bounds, and that causes us to grieve. It is only when we begin to take on God’s perspective that we see there is hope. We see what God wants to do with, for, in and through us!

### Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

When we accept God’s forgiveness, and we trust in his acceptance of us, we no longer boldly and blindly and defensively assert our paper-thin mask of “goodness.” Happy...blessed...are those who mourn, **for they will be comforted.**

Tough, angry, bitter kids bite their lip and refuse to cry, no matter what. Healthy kids cry, because they still have a soft, vulnerable heart that feels pain...and happiness. Which one describes you...in your relationship with your Heavenly Father?

Mourning is an act of trust and surrender, a sign you trust someone (God) bigger than yourself. What do you take to God and mourn?

What is your next step of faith?

### Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for being my father. Thank you for teaching me to respond to brokenness in me and in the world not by angrily hardening my heart but openly sharing my vulnerability and frustration with you who hears my prayers and cares more deeply than I can fully appreciate or understand.

## Day 3 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

### Conversation Starter

If you could draw a roadmap of you and your relationships, what would it look like? Would you be in the middle of a busy highway? By yourself at the end of a lonely road?

### Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

#### Scripture:

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matthew 5:1-5 NLT**

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other. **John 15:1-17 NLT**

#### Sermon Insights:

Jesus said, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” There was a time in history when people believed that humanity could solve its own problems. Poor in spirit means we realize we cannot go it alone. We understand that we need the divine, saving, and staying power of God.

### Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

Why is it essential to be connected to Jesus?

What is the difference between being completely independent of Jesus and being wholly dependent on Jesus?

Do you need Jesus’ wisdom to replace your own wisdom?

Do you need Jesus’ family to be in your life instead of being alone spiritually?

Are you following Jesus’ command?

### Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for giving me life and staying connected and committed to me through my highs and lows. Help me to be truly satisfied in your love, and strengthen me to love others selflessly.

## Day 4 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

### Conversation Starter

King David was an extremely successful warrior...and a strongly sensitive poet. He was also Jesus' great-great grandpa on his mother's side. What do you think David was like?

### Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

#### Scripture:

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matthew 5:1-5 NLT**

*King David after having sinned grievously with Bathsheba and orchestrating her husband's death so he could cover it up:* “Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you.

You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit— with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar. **Psalms 51:1-19 NLT**

### Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

David went TO the ultimate Judge (Almighty God) to confess and ask for mercy. What does that say about David's willingness to trust God? Do you trust God enough to be honest and ask for mercy for your sins?

How willing are you to forgive?

Connect Jesus' words “God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted” with David's realization, “You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.”

What does this say about God's heart for you?

How does that translate into long-term happiness for those who follow Jesus?

### Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, you treat me so much better than I deserve. Thank you for pointing out my sin, not to increase my guilt or shame, but so that I can confess it to you and be totally forgiven. I choose to be happy...because you are kind and make happy those who are poor and realize their need for you! Thank you for your unconditional love!

## Day 5 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

### Conversation Starter

What surprising thing has God done for you, with you, or in you recently?

### Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

#### Scripture:

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matthew 5:1-5 NLT**

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water.

So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

“Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.”

And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him.

His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. **Luke 5:1-11 NLT**

#### Sermon Insights:

We want the blessings, the contentment, the happiness that only God can bring. If anyone in this world should reflect contentment and joy, it is we who are Christians.

We have no right to be boring, sour, dreary, complaining, grumbling, contentious people. We reflect the Lord’s glory, and we should not tarnish it by our attitudes.

### Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

God blesses the humble. It’s humbling when you work hard and get NOTHING for it. Why do you think Jesus allowed them to experience miraculous success in catching fish that day?

Peter’s response shows that he realized he did not deserve Jesus’ kindness to him. Jesus’ gift really humbled and even scared him. He knew he was in the presence of someone who was both REALLY kind and REALLY powerful. Have you experienced both sides of God?

Peter realized that the happiness Jesus offered wasn’t about the fish...Jesus said he would put him to work “fishing for people.” What does that say about Peter, that he chose to leave his boat and follow Jesus? What does that say about Jesus’ willingness to use plain, ordinary people? What does Jesus want to do for you today—and are you accepting it or trying to chase him away?

### Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, help me to follow you...even when I don’t have any idea where you are going!