

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you have a “fixed mindset” or a “growth mindset”? In other words, do you believe that you should just accept your current limits and work within them (like a jar with a lid), or do you believe that God is going to expand your character, growth, learning, experiences, and understanding (like a tree with roots reaching for the sky)?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

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:

The idea of the “growth mindset” says, “What matters isn’t how much I have, but what I do with it.” Here’s the truth: we are not like a jar with a lid on it. We are more like a plant with roots. What matters is not our raw ability but growing beyond where we are today—to BE more and to DO more. Failure is not devastation but fertilizer for growth. And growing involves trusting that I will receive nurture from a source beyond myself.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

According to this Scripture, is knowledge about Jesus the goal or a step on the pathway to a different goal? Where are you on that journey?

How is a “growth mindset” essential for true spiritual growth?

Why did God give YOU his “great and precious promises”?

What next step do you believe God wants you to take in your spiritual journey?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for helping me grow through your goodness, kindness and example. Thank you for giving me not just the desire to grow, but also the power to take steps of faith on my journey.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

In what way do you see Jesus as “unique”?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture and Sermon Insights:

Jesus had a unique relationship with God: “Abba, Father,” he cried out, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” **Mark 14:36**
NLT

Jesus had a unique ministry: Jesus said, “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.” **John 10:10–11** NLT

Jesus made unique claims: *Jesus told the Jews,* “Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad.” The people said, “You aren’t even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!” At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple. **John 8:56–59** NLT [NOTE: “I AM” was the name God used to refer to himself when talking to Moses. This is why the people wanted to kill him: “blasphemy” was a crime punishable by death in their culture. They understood Jesus was claiming to be God.]

Jesus led a unique life: So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. **Hebrews 4:14–16** NLT

Jesus died a unique death: *The Apostle Paul wrote,* “I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.” **1 Corinthians 15:3–7** NLT

People came to the staggering conclusion that Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be: the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity—that Jesus was himself God.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Often, the Christian path progresses from ignorance and unbelief...to belief in Jesus...to being forgiven of your sins and given a new life...to a process of grateful life transformation—becoming like Jesus and loving others through the actual power and presence of Jesus living both IN and THROUGH you.

Where are you at in your spiritual journey? Where are the people you care about most?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for the total uniqueness of Jesus and how he gives us life! Make me more like Jesus!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How do you really know that what you choose to believe is true?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: This letter is from John, the elder. I am writing to the chosen lady and to her children, whom I love in the truth—as does everyone else who knows the truth—because the truth lives in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy, and peace, which come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ—the Son of the Father—will continue to be with us who live in truth and love.

How happy I was to meet some of your children and find them living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded. I am writing to remind you, dear friends, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning. Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning.

I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked so hard to achieve. Be diligent so that you receive your full reward. Anyone who wanders away from this teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don’t invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work. I have much more to say to you, but I don’t want to do it with paper and ink. For I hope to visit you soon and talk with you face to face. Then our joy will be complete. Greetings from the children of your sister, chosen by God. **2 John (the entire letter) NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Jesus was fully God, but also fully human in every way. Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, exhaustion, grief, trouble, anger, and pain. Jesus grew like we grow, bled like we bleed, and died like we die.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How does the Apostle John define real love?

“Gnosticism” was an early and invasive false teaching that was characterized by “secret wisdom” only held by certain people, the teaching that Jesus was an apparition that did not leave footprints when he walked, and the belief that “spiritual is good” and “physical is evil” (which translated into, “As long as you know the secret spiritual wisdom, it doesn’t matter what you do physically”). This denial of the basic gifts of Christianity threatened to undo the powerful transformation Jesus brought. Jesus offers forgiveness to anyone who repents—not just powerful and manipulative religious people with “secret wisdom.” Jesus came to earth in a physical body, he gives us power to resist sin and embrace good in our physical body, and he promises a physical resurrection body when we die.

We are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, AND strength. Are you doing this?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for the power to live a new life—in my heart, soul, mind AND physical strength! Thank you for revealing false teaching that would undermine your powerful transformation!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What caused you to “grow up” from being a child to becoming an adult?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.” The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him. **Mark 1:9–13 NLT**

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Romans 8:5–14 NLT

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people. **Luke 2:52 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Jesus was completely and utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is called the second Adam, the beginning of a new race of Spirit-filled and Spirit-dependent people.

If you want to know what humanity is supposed to look like, look at Jesus.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Jesus showed us the perfect example of following the Holy Spirit even when it meant personal difficulty in his human body. How does Jesus’ example help inspire you to obey even when it is hard?

That’s pretty graphic wording: *put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, and you will live*. It’s a life or death struggle. Make a list of who you need in your life to survive spiritually.

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I have no hope of life apart from your Holy Spirit. Fill me, change me, and empower me through your Holy Spirit!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What habit have you learned to love in your own life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry. Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.” But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone.’” Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. “I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.”

Jesus replied, “The Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’” Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’” Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’” When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came. Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!” Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. **Luke 4:1–22 NLT**

Sermon Insights: Jesus opened himself to the Holy Spirit by developing rhythms, habits, practices, and disciplines in his life.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

If you choose to depend more fully on the Holy Spirit:

- What freedom will you experience?
- What worries will you lose?
- What new patterns will you adopt?
- What are you waiting on?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, help me open myself up to the Holy Spirit’s power in my life. Help me develop healthy spiritual rhythms, habits, practices, and disciplines in my life!