

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

What is a gift from God that you did not realize was from God at first?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And with those words he breathed his last.

When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent.” And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow. But Jesus’ friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish high council, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Then he took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a long sheet of linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock. This was done late on Friday afternoon, the day of preparation, as the Sabbath was about to begin.

As his body was taken away, the women from Galilee followed and saw the tomb where his body was placed. Then they went home and prepared spices and ointments to anoint his body. But by the time they were finished the Sabbath had begun, so they rested as required by the law. **Luke 23:44–56 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Jesus pleaded in prayer to the Father not to have to endure the agony of shouldering the guilt of the world. Yet in his pleading, he trusted the will of the Father even to the last second of his agony when he shouted his final cry of trust and escaped the physical world in death. If it was hard for Jesus to trust, and yet he did until the very end, that is my goal as well: with the power and strength given to me by the Holy Spirit, I will endure until my end and trust my spirit into the hands of the Father.

How long had Joseph of Arimathea spent carving the tomb that he gave as a gift to the body and memory of Jesus—with no understanding or hope that Jesus would *come out alive*? This was a bold act of faith, given the political fervor of the day. He had no idea what his gift would mean, or that his tomb would be the scene of the *resurrection of Jesus from the dead*. In a unique way, this act symbolizes the journey offered to each of us: I must decide if I will offer my body back to God, die to myself, and become a new “location” for God to “bring Jesus to life”! **Romans 6:4** says, “For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.”

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for bringing Jesus to life after he died to take away my guilt forever. Make my life—my body, mind, soul, strength—a location where I “die to myself” so Jesus can be brought to life in and through me!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you allow yourself to be amazed by Jesus?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes.

The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.”

Then they remembered that he had said this. So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it. However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened. **Luke 24:1–12 NLT**

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. “The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. **Isaiah 55:8–11 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

What are some amazing things God has accomplished in your life?

Are you curious, open, and hungry for God to do new things that will astound you?

What avenues do you explore God’s amazing plan—Scripture, prayer, relationships with changed people, wise writings/information?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, I know that your truth never changes, but I do. Help me be humble, honest, and open to your surprising work in the world. Mature me so that I can be both wise and childlike—open to what you want me to see, experience and share. Use me as you continue to reach and reconcile people to yourself through Jesus! THANK YOU for resurrecting Jesus from the dead and bringing me to life through your Holy Spirit!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What aspect of Jesus’ character do you like the most?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.” “What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

“Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”

Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. **Luke 24:13–27 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why do you think Jesus is sometimes mysterious to the people he is leading?

If Jesus had fulfilled all of his disciples’ earthly dreams of an earthly kingdom, national security, food security, and political dominance, but he didn’t die, rise from the dead, or send the Holy Spirit to change people from the inside out, what would have changed?

What are your dreams, hopes, aspirations, and prayers focused on—are they God-sized and Jesus-centered, or would they be disappointing if they all came true?

Have you embraced Jesus’ teaching that suffering is actually an important aspect of a real spiritual journey and a vibrant, secure faith?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to trust, help me to grow, and enable me to learn and listen. You are so good and trustworthy...yet your ways are so different from what I would do. I do have faith, but it is limited. Help my faith grow significantly so that I can rest in your presence and not be phased by the temporary difficulties of the world.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who was patient with you? Who are you being patient with now?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.”

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

“Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.” As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. **Luke 24:28–43 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Why did Jesus carefully display that he had a physically resurrected body and was not a ghost?

Do you look forward to having a resurrected body in the “new heavens and the new earth”?

Why is it essential to use this life to prepare for the next?

Why do you think Jesus was very patient with his disciples?

Who is God patiently guiding, correcting, and loving through you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for forgiving me, giving me new life, and using me to love others. Thank you for giving us hope beyond the grave. Thank you that we do not “only live once”!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you follow Jesus because you love him and want to really embrace the life he gives, or do you follow religious rules fearfully out of a sense of duty, shame and guilt, or fear of punishment? Which do you believe God wants you to embrace, and why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ You are witnesses of all these things.

“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”

Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God. **Luke 24:44–53 NLT**

After his conversation, the Apostle Paul wrote: So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. 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. **Romans 8:1–6 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Human nature (which fuels fear-based religion) would suggest that “there is forgiveness of sins for all who work hard, feel shame/guilt, and earn it” (fear-based control for the purpose of behavior modification). Jesus says, “There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.” What is the difference between “penance” (the “I CAN do it” attitude of working off the penalty for your sin) and “repentance” (turning to the judge with an “I CAN’T do it” attitude of admitting need and asking for mercy)? Which creates pride (isolation because of success or isolation because of failure), and which one creates true reconciliation between yourself and God?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, I am not worthy of your love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. But I humbly celebrate you because of your kindness and mercy towards me. You sent Jesus to take my guilt, and I stand confidently where you have put me—in your presence without a single fault because of your choice to love and forgive me!