

Teaching SOAP

God wants to speak to you through His living Word! Spending daily time with God through His Word and in prayer is an essential part of a growing relationship with Christ. To develop consistent, daily time with God, you'll need five basic things:

1. A time and place.

Every healthy relationship requires consistent, focused time spent alone together, free from distractions. The best time to have a quiet time is when you are at your best and your schedule allows for consistency. Start with 15" a day and build from there.

- When and where will you meet alone with God?

2. A Bible.

Find a Bible translation that is easy to read and accurate. We recommend starting with the NIV or ESV versions. When looking for a good Bible, it's helpful to choose a Study Bible or a Life Application Bible, which include helpful notes to assist us in better understanding the passage.

- **New International Version (NIV)** - Thought-for-Thought translation (Dynamic Equivalence)
The NIV prioritizes clarity and readability, aiming to communicate the intended meaning of the original text in contemporary English. It often smooths out idioms, grammar, and syntax to better match modern usage.
- **English Standard Version (ESV)** - Word-for-Word adaptation (Essentially Literal)
The ESV seeks to remain as close as possible to the original wording and structure, making it a more literal translation. It maintains traditional theological terms and original phrasing when possible.

3. A Bible reading plan.

A reading plan helps you know what to read in your Bible. The best way to read the Bible is to read a book through in its entirety to get an accurate understanding of the context. The YouVersion Bible app is a free resource that has a variety of Bible reading plans.

4. A notebook and a pen.

Marking in your Bible helps you interact with God's Word. Keeping a journal is a way for you to record what God is speaking to you and allows you to see how God reveals Himself. The act of writing also imprints truth into your soul in a deeper way.

5. A humble attitude.

More than anything else, a hungry and eager attitude turns the written Word into an encounter with God. The Holy Spirit is our helper who teaches us the truth in a way that not only instructs our minds but also transforms our hearts. As you read, ask God to reveal Himself to you through His Word.

Learning to Study God's Word

Reading the Bible isn't just about gaining knowledge—it's an opportunity to develop a relationship with the living God! God's Word is alive and active, and every time we open it, there's an opportunity for Him to speak, change, and grow us to become more like Jesus.

As you spend time with Him, don't worry about following a perfect plan. Just slow down, quiet your heart, and ask God to show you something new. One helpful way to engage with Scripture is the **S.O.A.P. method**—it's a simple tool to help you reflect, apply, and live out what you're reading.

Scripture

The best way to get the most out of Scripture is to read through a book or section of the Bible. As you read, invite God to speak to you and make His Word come alive. Your goal isn't to rush, but to slow down and think about the scripture. Biblical meditation is like chewing on the Word—chewing on it, turning it over in your heart, and allowing it to sink in. If this is your first time reading the Bible, we recommend starting with the Gospel according to Mark.

Observation (timeless truth)

Here are three basic questions to help you with your **observation** and **application**:

1. What does this teach me about God?
2. What does this reveal about the human condition?
3. From what I've read, how does the Gospel transform my life this week?

As you read the Bible, remember to think about the original context—who it was written to and why. God's Word teaches timeless truths that help us grow in our walk with Jesus. God's truth reveals both our need for grace and His deep love for us, stirring gratitude within us and a growing desire to follow Him.

- The Bible Project offers short, informative videos that provide an overview of each book in the Bible.

When observing a scripture passage...

- What is the historical context?
- Who is the original audience?
- What did it mean to the original hearers?
- What is the timeless truth?

Remember: Scripture can never say what it was never originally intended to say.¹

Application

The goal of our Bible reading journey is not just to know more information, but to apply God's truth in our lives so we can live it out. God desires for us to be *doers* of the Word, not just *hearers*. The application is where you respond to God's Word through worship. What does it mean for us? How does it apply to us? Part of reflecting is memorizing verses that speak to you in a special way.

- What is God speaking to you?
- How can I put into practice what I just read?
- Is there a sin I need to confess?
- Does my attitude need to change?
- Is there a command I need to obey?
- Is there an example I should follow?
- How is my faith stretched and challenged?
- How does this scripture challenge me to have greater faith and trust in God?

Here's the last question you should always ask yourself...

- How does the gospel of Jesus Christ save, heal, transform, redeem... your life?

The word reveals who God is. It also reveals how we fall short of who God created us to be. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus bridges the gap between who God is and who we are, bringing transformation and restoration to our lives.

Prayer

You can conclude your devotional time by listening and talking with God about what He has shown you, which will lead you to worship Him for who He is and what He's done. This is also an opportunity for you to pray about things that are on your heart.

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014)

An example of SOAP using John 15:1-5:

Scripture:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Observation:

Scripture often refers to Israel as a vine. Here, Jesus describes Himself as the true vine who is a source of nourishment and life. Jesus is teaching His followers that He is the source of life. Pruning produces greater fruitfulness and growth. Fruitfulness for Christ's followers is only possible when His people abide or remain in Him (verse 4). Jesus repeats this again in verse 5 for emphasis.

Application:

To live the flourishing life God created for me to enjoy, I must spend time with Him. As I sit in His presence, read His Word and listen to His voice, He "cuts out" the things in my life (sin) that are displeasing to Him. He prunes other areas (attitudes, weaknesses) to make greater growth and fruitfulness possible. I invite Him into the broken areas of my life and ask for His grace to shape me to better reflect who He is.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for being the true vine – my source of life, nourishment, sustenance and fruitfulness. Reveal to me the areas that need to be cut away and pruned so I may become more like You.

Closing out your devotional time.

Pray and ask God to help you remember what He spoke to you that day. It's helpful to date your entries and write a title and a theme. These help you when you want to refer back to certain entries – not only for you, but also when you want to share something God spoke to you to encourage others.

Title - Write a specific title for that day.

Theme - What themes or main thread did you observe in this passage? For example, prayer, forgiveness, hope, God's love, etc.

Now It's Your Turn!

Ask God to speak to you as you read and apply **SOAP to Matthew 22:36-40**.

As you read the scripture passage, remember to keep in mind the three guiding questions:

1. What does this teach me about God?
2. What does this reveal about my human condition?
3. From what I've read, how does the Gospel transform my life this week?

Scripture:

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40

Observation:

Application:

Prayer:

While any time you spend with God is meaningful, just like building any relationship, there is no replacement for consistent, focused time with God. Don't treat your time with God as a task to check off—it's an invitation. We make space in our day not out of guilt or obligation, but because we're hungry to know Him more. Over time, these moments of connection shape our hearts, deepen our trust, and fill our lives with the intimacy and purpose that only come from walking closely with God.