

Our Refuge & Strength

April 19, 2020



Daily Devotions

SOAP Introduction

As an individual or as a family, use this SOAP study to connect with Jesus each day this week. SOAP stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. When we do a SOAP study, we want to root ourselves in the Scriptures, observing what they have for us, applying them to our lives, and then communing with God in prayer both before and after our time in the Bible.

Each day there will be multiple Scriptures for you to ask questions about, sit with, hear from God, and be invited to respond in action to.

If you're doing this individually, be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, each day's passages, and each of the questions. If you are doing this as a family, don't be afraid to have each person in your family read one of the verses or to "popcorn read" if it's a longer passage (meaning, don't be afraid to have one person read a verse or two and then another read a couple verses and then another a couple verses).

Parents, if you are going through this with your children, be sure to ask questions that will help your children engage with the daily Scriptures by asking good, concrete questions.

Day One // The Storm

You would think that *experienced* fishermen – adept at making their nets, navigating the waters, cooing the fish into unsuspecting traps – would have known what to do. A storm came. These disciples were trapped. There was nothing they could do. All normalcy was gone – only fear, dread, and hopelessness remained.

But Jesus...

Scripture: **Read Matthew 14:22-33**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- What words or phrases resonate inside of you as you read and re-read these passages?
- Imagine what it would have been like for you to be one of the disciples experiencing this storm. What do you feel? How do your present circumstances in light of COVID-19 make you feel? How do these two scenarios compare or contrast?
- Normally, the disciples would have all of the control (they were experienced fishermen, after all). What in your life do you normally have influence over that gives you a sense of control and power over your life? Has this been disrupted in any way? How does that feel? Explain.
- What characteristic about Jesus do you find in this passage that brings you comfort to your current situation?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- What tangible action steps do you feel like God is inviting you into as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Write down what your storm is and what that storm feels like on a sheet of paper. Then, write a prayer to God, surrendering to him what you wrote down.

Day Two // God knows what He's doing (He's in control of the storm)

If you're able to, remember back to times of yore – when one could lollygag through grocery stores; spoil their spouse with dinner *at a restaurant* downtown; and loiter through the mall on the weekends. Good times, right? Odds are good that you had a sense of control in your life back then. After all, our grocery stores provide all the food we need, we can transport ourselves to anywhere we'd like faster than we have ever been able to before, we can out maneuver mother nature by glancing at an app, we can make it daytime during nighttime with electricity, and all of that is just the tip of the iceberg!

But what happens when we lose a little bit of that control? For many of us, COVID-19 has put a crack in our foundation because it has made us feel like things are so *out* of control. How does that change how we view God? *Is* God still large and in charge even when it doesn't feel like it?

Scripture: **Read Psalm 27:1-14.**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- Read and re-read this passage slowly. What words or phrases stand out to you from these verses? Why do you think they are resonating with you right now?
- Put yourself in David's shoes. If anyone had power and control, it would have been him since he was the king. But it seems like he even acknowledges that's not really the case. What does Psalm 27 tell you about power and control?
- Do you feel like you have a hard time giving up control? Why?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- What is one thing you are holding onto that you need to give over to God?
- Where do you feel like God is inviting you into greater stewardship as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Prayerfully imagine handing over each aspect of your life into God's hands and giving him control over those things. In your mind, actually envision giving each of these things to God and actually envision him taking them from you.

Bonus: To practice giving over control, it can be helpful to get a piece of paper and draw three columns. In column one, label it "Me." In column two, label it "Others." In column three, label it "God." Then, in each respective column, list out the things that you are responsible for, the things that others are responsible for, and the things that God is responsible for.

Are there any places where you are trying to control things that only others should control? Are there any places where you are trying to control things that only God should control?

Day Three // Security during the storm

If you think about it, security and intimacy go hand in hand. Relationships in which both couples are secure are couples that share a deep level of emotional, mental, and physical intimacy. People in the workplace experience greater levels of security whenever they have a sense of intimacy with their co-workers and their supervisors. Why? Because with intimacy comes knowledge, and with knowledge comes security in where we stand with others, at work, etc.

Jesus had an intimacy with the Father that grounded him so that even though the cross loomed over his future, he was able to “set his face towards Jerusalem.”

I wonder what it would do to our sense of security if we rooted ourselves deeply in the Father?

Scripture: **Read Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; John 15:1-17.**

Observation: *What do I see in these passages?*

- What words or phrases resonate inside of you as you read and re-read these passages?
- How was Jesus' security with the Father rooted in his intimacy?
- Do you agree or disagree with the thought that security comes from intimacy? Where have you seen this to be true in your own life?
- How would you describe your relationship with God? Would you describe it as being intimate? How does this affect the security you feel in your life?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- What tangible actions did Jesus take to pursue intimacy with the Father? What from Jesus's life will you replicate in your own life?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater intimacy and security as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: *Father, help me to draw close despite my incessant want to pull away. Let my heart know that you are safe, that you have my back, that you can be trusted. Amen.*

Day Four // Jesus can be trusted in the midst of the storm

With the news always broadcasting the increasing cases of those diagnosed with COVID-19 and with the death toll rising each day, it can be hard to trust anyone or anything other than our own selves.

One thing I've realized more and more lately, however, is that even I let myself down so many times. I don't beat myself up about it, but it's just part of my human nature.

So...who or what do I turn to? Whom can I trust?

Scripture: **Read Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 9:1-20**

Observation: *What do I see in these passages?*

- Read and re-read these passages slowly. What words or phrases resonates with you from these verses?
- In Psalm 9:10, the Psalmist – who is David – writes about trusting God. What gives him the ability to trust God from the surrounding verses?
- How would you describe your ability to trust God right now? Explain your response.

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- If you were 100% trusting in God today, would anything change? What?
- What needs to happen in order for you to 100% trust Jesus?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater trust as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Pray with Jesus and describe your level of trust with him. Be honest and sincere. God can handle your position. Recount the ways in which God has been faithful to you in the past.

Day Five // Jesus is in the storm with you

Often times during moments of worry or fear or chaos or pain, it feels like God is in a whole other universe. And let's be honest, sometimes when we're hurting, we question if God even exists.

But there is a theological truth that we need to hold onto, especially during time of crisis: God is near. God is present. God will not abandon you. He is not too busy for you. He is not disconnected. God will never leave you.

Scripture: **Read Jeremiah 23:23-24; Acts 17:27-28; John 14:25-31.**

Observation: *What do I see in these passages?*

- If you were to describe how God's proximity to you feels right now, what word would you use? Why?
- What words or phrases stand out to you from these verses? What do they reveal to you about the character of God?
- When was a time you felt God very close to you? When was a time when he felt far? What was the difference between those two times?
- Think about Jesus coming to die on the cross for our sins. How does that display the truth of God's desire to be near to you?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- How does knowing God is always with you change how you feel about your present circumstances?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you to follow him practically as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Write a prayer honestly telling God what his current proximity feels like. Talk to him about the ways in which you have been the one to draw away from him. Ask for forgiveness. Spend time in God's presence. Imagine yourself sitting with Jesus.