

Peace that Surpasses All Understanding

Part 2

May 3, 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 // Thinking wrongly

There are moments when Jesus was radically honest with people. In **Matthew 9:4**, Jesus looked at a group of teachers of the law and said to them, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?” I’m sure no one had every dared say something quite like that to these prestigious “men of God” before.

While this story in Matthew is all about some Pharisees not being able to see the work of God in front of their eyes because of their faulty thinking, the truth is that we might be kind of similar. Many times in life, we can miss out on God’s grace because we are too focused on worries, fears, doubts, insecurities, strongholds, lies from the enemy, past wounds, and so on. We never want to sweep those things under the rug, but we also don’t want to let them debilitate the life that God has for us either.

We need to check our thinking.

Scripture: **Read Matthew 9:1-8.**

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

- What words or phrases resonate inside of you as you read and re-read these verses?
- Imagine Jesus addressing his question in Matthew 9:4 to you personally. What “evil thoughts” do you entertain on a regular basis?
- What are examples of faulty thinking you have regarding God? How do these affect how you’re able to love God? What about in regard to yourself? What about in regard to other people?
- Describe a time when “wrong” thinking impacted your ability to be at peace.

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

- What truths do you need to write down and sit with to counter the “evil thoughts” you realized today?
- What tangible action steps do you feel like God is inviting you into as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Write a prayer confessing to God your wrong thinking. Bring to light how you think of him, yourself, and others that may not be in accord with the way of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to change your mind.

Day Two // Thinking rightly

Yesterday, we stopped and assessed some of our thinking that may not be very good. Today, we want to be sure we replace wrong thinking with right thinking. That's what Paul tells us to do in his letter to the Philippians in **Philippians 4:8**.

Today, we'll only be reading one verse because that one verse is JAM-PACKED with food for thought. Let's dive in.

Scripture: **Read Philippians 4:8**

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

- Read and re-read this passage slowly. What specific thing that Paul tells us to think on do you feel like God is inviting you to spend time with?
- Why do you feel like that one is standing out to you in this moment?
- Describe a time in your life where thinking rightly about a situation brought you comfort or peace.

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

- On a sheet of paper, make 7 columns. At the top of each column, write out the 7 things Paul tells us to think on (what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, praiseworthy) and list out things that correspond to each topic that you feel like you need to focus your thinking on.
- What true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, or praiseworthy things do you feel God inviting you to continue to think on after today? How do you plan on doing that?

Prayer: Write a prayer to God asking him to take your wrong thinking and transform your mind and help you focus on thinking rightly based on what you reflected on yesterday and today.

Day Three // Consequences of our thinking

Our mind is integral to our becoming more like Jesus. That's why Jesus includes it as one of the things that we must love God with (**Mark 12:30-31**)! And our thinking can greatly influence the quality of life we experience. It can affect how we are doing emotionally, physically, and relationally – for good or for bad.

The Apostle Paul knew this reality all too well. Bill Gaultiere writes about this when he says, "The great Apostle-Psychologist Paul says of the ungodly, '*Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind... They have become filled with every kind of wickedness... and depravity*' (**Romans 1:28-29**). In contrast, he says our great opportunity is to, '*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*' (**Romans 12:2**). This will produce greater health in us spiritually, emotionally, and physically."

Our thinking matters. It has consequences – for good or for bad.

Scripture: **Read Proverbs 21:29; Mark 12:30-31; Romans 1:28-31; Romans 12:2.**

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 do you think the mind plays a key role in directing our spiritual lives?
- How have you seen wrong thinking in someone's life lead to bad consequences?
How have you seen right thinking lead to good consequences in someone's life?
What would your answers be to these two questions if applied to you personally?
- How has your thinking (good or bad) affected your quality of life?

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

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

Prayer: *Father, transform my thinking. I know that right living comes from you helping me to think rightly. If it's wrong, I don't want it. If it's impure, I don't want it. If it's ignoble, I don't want it. If it's false, I don't want it. If it isn't praiseworthy, I don't want it. Help me, Lord. Amen.*

Day Four // Our thinking (could potentially) change everything

When you invest in something or someone, there is a hope that you will one day see a return on your investment. I remember when I first learned of compound interest. If you invest in a Roth IRA, you will begin tapping into compound interest. You will put in a little money now, to one day reap a lot later. That may be oversimplified, but the point is a good one and I think it's applicable to growing spiritually too (with God's help, of course)

In the book of Galatians, Paul talks about how we are to sow to the Spirit to then be able to reap from the Spirit. And in 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about how important it is to take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ, so as to "demolish strongholds." I wonder how this truth would affect our ability to fight anxiety, worry, and fear.

Scripture: **Read Galatians 6:7-9; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6.**

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?
- When you think about sowing to the Spirit, what comes to mind? In what ways have you been doing this?
- In what ways have you been sowing to the flesh in your life? How have you reaped from the flesh as a result?
- What do you think your life would look like after 20, 30, 40 years of taking thoughts captive and making them obedient to Jesus? What would your relationships look like? What about your relationship with the Lord?

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

- In the midst of the coronavirus, what would it practically look like for you to sow to the Spirit right now?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater trust as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer: Write a prayer expressing your desire to sow to the Spirit and take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. Ask God for his help.

Day Five // Put it to practice

Oftentimes when storms come in our lives, our foundations are shaky. That's what causes us to fear. That's what causes us to be anxious. That's what causes us concern. That's what causes us to withdraw. That's what causes us to lash out.

Paul and Jesus offer us another solution to life's worries that isn't any of those. Paul and Jesus both emphasize the importance of *putting into practice* what they tell us to do. Jesus says that by doing so, we will ensure we have a firm foundation under our feet. Paul tells us that by putting what he tells us into practice, that the "God of peace will be with you."

Scripture: **Philippians 4:9; Matthew 7:24-27**

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

- When was a time in your life where you struggled, but through lots of practice you were able to learn something?
- What would it look like to apply the principle of practice to your spiritual life?
- What things keep you from putting Jesus or Paul's words into practice? How might this reality be keeping you from the life of Jesus you wish to experience? Explain your feelings on this.

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

- What is one tangible way God is inviting you to practice the faith this week? How are you going to practice your faith each day?

Prayer: Write a prayer to God and share with him how you plan on putting into practice Paul and Jesus' words. In fact, invite him into the conversation and ask him how he wants you to implement Jesus and Paul's words in your everyday life.