

HOW TO USE SOAP?

The SOAP Bible Study and Journaling Method is one of the simplest and most exciting tools for reading, studying and engaging with the Bible, God's written Word, to those who want to know Him in a personal way. It can be life-changing. It's based on a simple acrostic shared in the book *The Divine Mentor* by Wayne Cordeiro.

SOAP stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. SOAP is a journaling method that helps us grow in God's Word by recording our thoughts, emotions, and connections when reading the Bible.

- Step 1:** Schedule your daily devotional time. Designate a certain time and place when you are at your best. Give Him the prime moments of your day. Be consistent!
- Step 2:** Before you start, pray for God to grant you the capacity to understand and the willingness to apply the Scripture reading to your life today. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind so that you can understand, accept, and apply God's truth. (*1 Corinthians 2:12-14 Ephesians 1:17-19*)
- Step 3:** Use the reading schedule in the Table of Contents to find the day's Scripture passage. As you read the text for the day, underline or write down anything that speaks to you as a personal word to be applied. Consider reading in multiple translations for additional insight. When you read with an open heart, God will give you words of encouragement, direction, comfort, and correction.
- Step 4:** When you finish reading, identify the section of Scripture that you will journal. This is usually one or two verses that you have underlined or marked as you were reading.
- Step 5:** Use S.O.A.P. to write down observations from the passage, how you will apply God's Word to your life today and record a prayer in response to what God has revealed to you.
- Step 6:** Create a title for your journal page and add it to the top. Also list it in the Table of Contents so you can go back to it for quick reference. This will be helpful in the future when you are reviewing and reflecting on what God has said and how God has directed you through His Word.

SCRIPTURE Read the chapter or passage from the Bible. While you read through the passage ask the Lord to show you the verse or section of the chapter that He wants to use to speak to your heart. Copy this verse word-for-word in your journal.

OBSERVATION Once you have selected the scripture verse or section that the Holy Spirit has directed you to, begin making observations. What in that verse/section stands out to you? How does it connect with something going on in your life?

Key Questions to Ask:

- **WHAT** does it say? (Facts)
- **WHO** is talking or being talked about? (identify who)
- **WHAT** is the subject or topic being discussed; what comes before and what follows after?
- **WHERE** is the activity or discussion taking place?
- **WHEN** is the activity or discussion taking place? (sequence)
- **WHY** is the activity or discussion taking place?
- **HOW** are the people involved responding?

** Also look for things emphasized, repeated, related, alike or unlike, true to life.

Three Key Thoughts:

- 1) Concentrate your attention on the text (Zoom in and Zoom out; overemphasize a different word each time you read the text)
- 2) Notice what is there and what is not (Read, Record, & Reflect)
- 3) Be accurate (never assume you already know what it says, read out, never read in)

APPLICATION Once you have made accurate observations, you are now ready to correctly interpret and rightly apply God's truth to your own life. Improper observation leads to incorrect interpretation which leads to inappropriate application. Until you know what the text says you are not prepared to determine what it means or how it applies. Some like to put the application in the form of a question.

Proverbs 24:32 (NIV) I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw.

General Rules of Interpretation:

- Interpret literally
- Interpret in context
- Interpret in view of history and culture
- Interpret in view of literary form (parables/proverbs/ narrative/prophecy/poetry)
- Interpret in view of other parts of Scripture
- Interpret in view of theological consistency

PRAYER Talk to the Lord about all that He has revealed to you through His Word. Write your prayer out, word-for-word in your journal. Consider saying back to God what God has said to you in His Word, and always speak humbly from your heart.