

## SOAP | *Luke 15:1-7*

We're going to continue in worship now, with a spiritual practice called SOAP. For this exercise you'll need a pen and a piece of paper. If you have a Bible you can open that up to Luke 15 – or you can just follow the words on the screen. OR you can click the SOAP button on the home page of our Southridge App to find everything you'll need.

We haven't done this exercise together for a while, but it's one we often recommend making a regular part of your daily time with God. It's actually one of the best spiritual-growth generators we have. If you've never done it before – maybe never even read the Bible before – don't worry; it's a simple exercise and we'll walk through it together step by step.

SOAP is an acronym that stands for Scripture, Observation, Application & Prayer.

We start by reading a passage of Scripture together; then I'll encourage you to read it again on your own. As you experience the reading, the first step is to simply be attentive for any words or phrases that stand out to you. Don't put pressure on yourself – just allow something in the passage to surface on its own. It may be because it feels especially relevant to life right now, maybe because it's challenging, or a new thought you don't quite get, you might not even know exactly why something's standing out to you, you just know that it is. Pay attention to your own gut as you read.

So I'll start.

**By this time a lot of men and women of questionable reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.**

**"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue. – Luke 15:1-7 (MSG)**

Now I'll give you a minute to read that again to yourself (silently or out loud).

And then take some time to choose a phrase or thought or even just word that most stands out to you, and write that down.

If you're at home and you need more time, feel free to pause the video. But once you've got your word or phrase, we move onto "O" which stands for *Observation*.

**OBSERVATION:**

So now take only just the part you wrote down. But don't rush into applying anything too quickly. First, stop and just think more deeply about those words. Who is speaking? Is there anything curious about why the author would've said it this way? Does it remind you of anything else you've read about or experienced with God? How do you see the heart of Jesus in what you're reading? Again, keep the pressure on yourself light, but come at it with a really open heart and mind. Get curious here! Write down every possible observation you can make.

**APPLICATION:**

Again, if you need more time, you can take it; when you're ready to move on, our next letter is "A" which stands for *Application*. How does this verse apply to your daily life? How might it speak into you and your current circumstances? How are you being challenged to live differently by this? The goal here is to move out of your head and get down into your heart. This is where God's general word to all of us, becomes God's specific word to you. As you write out whatever applications come to mind, let this part get personal.

**PRAYER:**

The final step is "P" which stands for *Prayer*. Very simply, now that you've read and reflected on these words and begun to apply them to your life, talk to God about it. Remembering that prayer means both speaking *and* listening. So talk to God about what you think you see in the text, and then listen for what the Spirit might want to say in return. Ask Jesus to give you the courage to act on what you're hearing, and to do the deep heart work that you can't do on your own.

Take a moment to either write or speak your prayer out now.

SOAP is a fantastic practice to engage in throughout the week. If you'd like some more inspiring passages to dig into in this way, you can check out the "Practice This Week" button below this video player, or subscribe to the Spiritual Practice notifications in our SR App to have them delivered right into your hand every morning.

Because we know that real life change happens best in community with others, why not share one of your SOAP discoveries (either this morning or in the week ahead) with at least one other person. This season continues to have way too much isolation built into it, but this is a way we can try to share our deeper lives with each other. So take a minute at some point to share with someone else what's going on in your heart these days. You'll both be richer for it.

Now let's worship together the tender-hearted shepherd who does go out to find us, time and time again. Calling us back home to ourselves, to each other, and to God's own embrace.