

SOAP | *Luke 6:27-36*

We're going to continue now with a spiritual practice called SOAP. For this you'll need a pen and a piece of paper. If you have a Bible you can open that to Luke 6 – or you can just follow the words on the screen. You could also click the SOAP button on the home page of our Southridge App to find everything you'll need there.

This SOAP method of Bible study is a practice we often encourage to make a regular part of your time with God. Digging into and interacting with scripture is such a good spiritual-growth exercise, such a good place to catch a deeper glimpse of God. But even if you've never read the Bible before – don't worry; it's not complicated and we'll walk through it together step by step.

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

We'll start by reading a passage of Scripture. As you experience the reading, the first move is really just to hear it, and be attentive for whatever words or phrases grab your attention. Maybe something feels especially relevant right now, maybe it's challenging, maybe it's a thought you don't quite get. You might not even know why exactly something's standing out to you, you just know that it is. Trust your insides.

So I'll read.

"If you're listening, here's My message: Keep loving your enemies no matter what they do. Keep doing good to those who hate you. Keep speaking blessings on those who curse you. Keep praying for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other cheek too. If someone steals your coat, offer him your shirt too. If someone begs from you, give to him. If someone robs you of your valuables, don't demand them back. Think of the kindness you wish others would show you; do the same for them.

Listen, what's the big deal if you love people who already love you? Even scoundrels do that much! So what if you do good to those who do good to you? Even scoundrels do that much! So what if you lend to people who are likely to repay you? Even scoundrels lend to scoundrels if they think they'll be fully repaid.

If you want to be extraordinary—love your enemies! Do good *without restraint*! Lend *with abandon*! Don't expect anything in return! Then you'll receive the truly great reward—you will be children of the Most High—for God is kind to the ungrateful and those who are wicked. So imitate God and be truly compassionate, the way your Father is."

Now you might want to read that again to yourself (silently or out loud). But then take some time to choose a phrase or the thoughts that most stands out to you, and jot them down.

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

OBSERVATION:

Our tendency in Bible reading is to go immediately to “what does it mean”. But don’t rush into applying anything too quickly. First, stop and just think more deeply about that part especially that you wrote down. And observe everything that you can about it and around it. Who is speaking? What’s the tone? Why do you think the author chose those words? Does it remind you of anything else you’ve read about or experienced with God? Now don’t put pressure on yourself, but come at it with a really open heart and mind. Get curious! Observe and imagine as much as you can into this. And again jot down every possible thing you can find.

APPLICATION:

Now our next move is into *Application*. How might this verse apply to your current circumstances and everyday life? How are you personally encouraged or challenged to live differently by it? Try to move beyond your intellectual, observational head space and get down into your lived heart space. This is where God's general word to all of us, becomes God’s specific word to you. So just write out whatever personal applications come to mind

PRAYER:

The final step is *Prayer*. Very simply, now that you've read and reflected on these words and begun to apply them to your life, just 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.

All this month as a community we’re reading through the Gospel of Luke – you can access that reading plan through the Spiritual Practices tab on our website or in the Daily Notifications in the App. But SOAP is a fantastic way to engage more deeply with those readings – maybe you want to give it a try in your daily practice through the week ahead.

For now, let’s worship together again. And sing about this wild extraordinary love that Jesus keeps inviting us all deeper into.