

SMALL GROUPS

LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **WELCOME NEW PEOPLE.** Take time to introduce new people.
- **START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group you value their time.
- **AVOID TALKING or TEACHING TOO MUCH.** Small groups are designed for everyone to share and grow together.

DO YOU MAKE THESE RELATIONSHIP MISTAKES WITH GOD?

ICEBREAKER |

What's the first thing you do each morning?

INTRODUCTION |

We all have a morning routine. Maybe it's a cup of coffee while we sit by the window. It could include a long run or a walk. Or maybe your routine is to jump in the shower and get going right away. In ancient Israel, everyone had the same routine. Each morning – and each evening before bed – they would recite what was known as the *Shema*. It was a declaration of who God was and how they related to Him. Jesus taught that the whole Law could be summed up in that one command. And when we look at it, we see how we can have a vibrant relationship with Him today!

READ I

In Luke 10:25-29, Jesus was asked how to inherit eternal life. This person wanted to know this: If I can only keep one commandment, which one should it be? Jesus replied by saying that the whole Law can be summed up in one single commandment. And then He quoted this passage:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (NIV)

This prayer is known as the **Shema**. That's a Hebrew word for "**hear**," the first word in this passage. And it's the most important part of the whole prayer, actually.

The word "hear" is not just there to get your attention. I'm sure you've been in a meeting where someone uses the words, "Alright, listen up!" to get everyone to quiet down. The word "**hear**" is the same word for "**do**." God expects us to not just hear what He has to say but respond to it appropriately.

What are some barriers that keep us from doing what we hear from God? In other words, what gets in the way of obedience in your life?

READ I

In Luke 10, the man responds to Jesus by reciting this prayer, and he lists four ways we are to love the Lord our God:

With All of Our **Heart**

With All of Our **Soul**

With All of Our **Strength**

With All of Our **Mind**

Your heart is the seat of your emotions. It's how you feel what you feel. If your heart is off, then your emotions may mislead you. But when your heart is connected to God, He will lead you.

Your soul is what makes up who you are. God knew you before you were ever born. He placed a personality in you, along with certain qualities and abilities. Your soul is also the intangible part of you that connects with God.

Your strength is your body. If you take care of it, you will be able to serve God and others. Your mind is how you think. It's your intellect and your reasoning. It's how you decide what to do and then get up enough will power to do it.

Can you think of an example of how we can love God with each of these four things? (Ex. We love God with all of our mind by studying scripture, we love God with all our heart by choosing to love others regardless of how we feel towards them, we love God with all our strength by taking care of our health, etc.)

READ I

These words are not a multiple-choice test. We don't pick and choose how we are to love God. Instead, He asks us to seek balance between these four ideas. If you lean too heavily in one area, you could be out of sync with God and others.

One way to think of these four ideas is as directions on a map that point in opposing directions. Take another look at them:

With All of Our **Heart**

With All of Our **Soul**

With All of Our **Strength**

With All of Our **Mind**

The heart is how we feel, and the mind is how we think. We can get too emotional and allow our feelings to override our thinking. Or we might be too analytical and fail to recognize other's feelings.

Strength represents everything you can touch and feel, the physical part of you. Your soul is the intangible part of you. Both work to make up who you are, and both are important. At church, during worship, is when your soul is loving God. But during the week, while you are helping a neighbor, it's your strength that responds to Him.

We are all made unique. How are you made unique when it comes to these four things? Which of these four is it easiest to love God with?

READ I

In Luke, the point of loving God is made clear by the line, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, the way we love God is by loving those around us.

When you love someone, you want to serve them. To serve God, though, is pretty difficult. He is in heaven, and we are on earth. But He came up with a great way to accomplish it. When we love those who are nearest us, we are loving the God we cannot see.

When you see a need, that is your cue to love God by meeting that need. Let your heart and mind get involved in the process! Put your soul and strength into it and get going!

Choose one of these four facets of your being. Now, how can you love your neighbor with that facet?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, will you commit to changing up your morning routine by reciting this prayer first thing? That way, you will be ready to spring into action when you see a need and want to love God by loving others with:

All of Your Heart

All of Your Soul

All of Your Strength

All of Your Mind

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do at least one (1) SOAP Devotions this week & share with your group.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear God, we do love You. You have given us everything that we have and all that we are. And with all that we have and all that we are, we love You by loving others. Give us clarity this week as we go about our day and see needs that can be met by love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.
Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

Day 2:

I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept healthy and faultless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.
1 Thessalonians 5:23 (CEV)

Day 3:

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.
Ephesians 4:16 (NLT)

Day 4:

You will look for the LORD your God, and if you search for Him with all your heart, you will find Him.
Deuteronomy 4:29 (GNT)

Day 5:

To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.
Mark 12:33 (NIV)