



NEW  
HOPE  
WINDWARD

# RELATIONAL VAMPIRES

LOVING THE PEOPLE WHO  
SUCK THE LIFE OUT OF YOU

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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# SMALL GROUP TIPS

- 1. START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group you value their time.
- 2. BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE.** Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.
- 3. CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT.** Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: "What is said in small group, stays in small group." **Nothing, nobody, never...** "*Share nothing, to nobody, never*" outside of the group.
- 4. MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY.** Communicate in advance when you will be unable to attend by either calling and/or texting your host or responding to the zoom email invitation by accepting or declining. This will help your host to plan accordingly especially if it is an in person small group gathering.
- 5. AVOID TALKING or TEACHING.** Small groups are designed for everyone to share and grow together.
- 6. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.** While not everyone will be ready or willing to help lead or answer questions, participating and reading God's word with others will help build confidence in each member and the group. Encourage all members to read sections and/or scriptures aloud for the group.
- 7. COMMIT TO 21 PRAYERS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.** Encourage your small group to complete the *21 Prayers For Healthy Relationships*. You can pick up this guide at Guest Services on Sundays or download at [NHWW.org](http://NHWW.org).
- 8. ASK FOR HELP.**  
The Small Group Ministry is here to help. Email [shawn@nhww.org](mailto:shawn@nhww.org) to ask any questions, request training or other assistance for your small group.

# RELATIONAL VAMPIRES

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## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT.** Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: “What is said in small group, stays in small group.” **Nothing, nobody, never...** *Share nothing, to nobody, never*” outside of the group.

## Week 1: Drained by Needy People

### ICEBREAKER

Share one activity that refreshes and replenishes you.

### INTRODUCTION

In life, there are life-giving people who encourage, inspire and strengthen us and there are overly needy people who can leave us drained, depleted and weary. It could be a coworker, relative or friend. Serving and helping people is an important tenant in our faith that was modeled time and time again by Jesus. So how do we love overly needy people in healthy ways? This week we will learn how to love the overly needy people who suck the life out of us.

## READ |

Some people are more difficult to deal with than others. There will always be some people who are overly needy at times or quite frequently. They set on your nerves, drain your energy and take up more of your time and efforts. These are **EGR's (Extra Grace Required)** people.

There are some in every church, every office, every school and yes, every family. And we too can be EGR's because everybody has bad days where we require extra grace. God allows EGR's in our lives both for their benefit and ours. They create an opportunity for us to grow in our love. Jesus said it this way:

*“If you love those who love you, why should you be commended? Even sinners love those who love them. Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act, for he is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. -Luke 6:32, 35-36 (NIV)*

Jesus says **grace is action**. We are to love those who are difficult to love. Just as God gives extra grace to us, we are to extend extra grace to others. This practice will help us grow in becoming more loving, thus becoming more like God.

**What are some practical ways you can love EGR's, overly needy people? (Ex. Focus on their need rather than your own, freely forgive, encourage rather than complain. Please do not mention their name)**

## READ |

We all have people in our lives that demand a little more time and attention than others. It's complicated because we can really care about them but no matter what we do, it doesn't seem to be enough. As we seek to help and guide them, there are various ways we can respond to their needs. Here are two of many ways we can respond:

**Enabling a Needy Person.** This is the act of encouraging someone's dysfunctional behavior. While not always, it often includes directly supporting someone to remain in a sin or addiction. While we can be quick to want to help someone by giving them what they are asking for, scripture warns us to be wise and ensure we do not join them in sin.

*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; **keep yourself pure.** -1 Timothy 5:22 (ESV)*

While Paul was instructing Timothy to avoid involving himself in the potential sins or misconduct of those he appointed for ministry leadership, the principle can apply to our

dealings with needy people. We need to be careful we are not enabling others to a point in which we are party to their sinful actions. Whether the needy persons actions are sinful or not, we need to be careful we don't keep allowing them to be overly needy.

**Empowering a Needy Person.** One of the biggest causes of quarreling in your family, with your friends or at your work is when others expect us to meet some of their needs that only God can fulfill. When an overly needy person looks to us to meet their emotional and spiritual needs, we end up frustrated and depleted because only God can ultimately meet all of our needs.

*And my God will meet all of your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*  
*-Philippians 4:19 (NIV)*

If you or another has a need, don't look first to your loved one or friend to fill it. **Go to Jesus first.** He's the one who can ultimately meet all of your needs. Though we want to help needy people, the greatest gift we can give them is to point them towards the one who can meet all of their needs, Jesus!

**Review the two types of responses to needy people (Enabling or Empowering). Which one speaks to you the most? What can you do to point a person towards Jesus to meet their needs? (Please do not mention any names of needy people)**

## READ |

We reap (get back) what we sow (put in). This biblical principle applies to our efforts in following in Jesus' footsteps by generously serving others, even needy people.

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure...will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*  
*-Luke 6:38 (NLT)*

While it's true that the more we give, the more we receive, we all have limits when it comes to constantly serving the overly needy people in our life, because:

***Burnout is real.*** If we are rundown and tired from constantly meeting the needs of others without tending to our own, we have little to nothing left to serve anyone. We need to take time daily to meet with God through prayer and to read God's word in order to be recharged and refilled by His grace and mercy.

*Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*  
*-Luke 5:15-16 (NIV)*

Even though Jesus is fully God, He was also fully human. He got tired and fatigued just

like we can. To recover from serving the needs of others, He had a habit of getting out into nature to pray, seeking to be recharged and renewed in order to continue generously serving others.

**Burnout is real. Like a car needs to be refilled with gas, what refills and replenishes you? Do you have a habit of praying daily and getting into God's word to be recharged? If not, what can you do to find 5 or more minutes a day to do so?**

## **READ |**

When it comes to loving the overly needy people in our life, we should:

- 1. Realize we can't please everyone:** Paul reminds us that servants of God don't live to please overly needy people, rather we live to please an audience of one. (*Galatians 1:10*)
- 2. Learn to say no to unrealistic expectations.** “Speak the truth in love” (*Ephesians 4:15*). Sometimes the truth is we need to say no. When the needs of others take away from our ability to meet our responsibilities, it's fine to say no—just say it with love.
- 3. Pray for them.** Jesus' instructions are simple and clear: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (*Matthew 5:44*). Pray for difficult people, and then trust that God will speak to them. It will help you and the needy people in your life.

**Which of these speaks to you the most? Share why and what you will do. Please don't mention any names of needy people.**

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

**This week, take comfort in God's love for you as you make Him the source of your strength to pray for, interact with and serve the needy people in your life to Jesus. Serve others generously while staying balanced in your faith to avoid burnout and temptation.**

- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER:**

God, You are my good and just Lord, thank You for being my source of strength as I try my best to help others in this fallen world. Give me the discernment to guide and lead others to you so they may be healed in your mighty name. Keep me accountable in my actions and efforts as I seek balance in You to avoid burnout and despair. I trust you completely, I am a willing and open vessel for your will to be done through me, so use me for your glory and the benefit of others, In Jesus' name, amen.



## Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

### Here's an example:

**S:** *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

*--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)*

**O:** Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

**A:** Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."***

***--Proverbs 14:31 (NIV)***

### **Day 2:**

***Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.***

***--Galatians 1:10 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"***

***--Acts 20:35 (NIV)***

### **Day 4:**

***"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done."***

***--Proverbs 19:17 (NIV)***

### **Day 5:**

***"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?"***

***--James 2:14-16 (NIV)***



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## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

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## Week 2: Drained by Critical People

### ICEBREAKER

What is the worst movie you have ever seen? Share one reason why.

### INTRODUCTION

All of us will face people who are overly critical. God created us each differently with our own perspectives and opinions that will not match others all the time. This week we will be discussing how to navigate relationships with critical people. As we look to and model Christ, we will discover how to receive and respond to criticism and how to overcome a critical spirit. This week we will learn to love the fault finders and those who are critical of our life and our choices.

## READ |

We all know at least one critical person, that someone who is always finding our faults and judging them openly front of us or others. These **fault finders** can be extremely destructive to relationships and our self-esteem as they divide us, hurt us and tempt us to be filled with **resentment**.

*But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*  
-Galatians 5:15 (ESV)

Paul is speaking to a divided church with critical people. He makes it clear that if they continue to attack each other, they will both be destroyed. To make sure that we are not destroyed by the critical people in our life, here are some ways we can respond:

**Don't Respond!** Sometimes the best response is no response. When the chief priests and elders made various accusations against Jesus, he was silent (*Matthew 27:14*).

**Don't Avenge!** Negativity has the power to take us away from what God wants for our life. The negativity of our critics can make us bitter and creates a foothold for the devil. Sometimes we need to remove ourselves from our critics and trust God to respond.

*Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."* -Romans 12:19 (NIV)

**Be Led By The Spirit.** Criticism can hurt and our initial reaction is often an emotional defense. This can add fuel to an already hot fire. The best way to respond to a critical spirit is to pray first and ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond calmly and tactfully.

*So I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions... -Galatians 5:16,20 (NLT)*

**Discuss a time that you engaged with a critical person and it made things worse. Which of the 3 points above speaks to you the most (Don't Respond, Don't Avenge or Be Led By The Spirit)?**

## READ |

Critics can deeply effect our self-esteem and our opinion of ourselves. As Christians, it is important that we are able to receive and process criticisms in biblical ways. When guarding our heart against criticism and attacks to our self-esteem, it is important that we practice receiving confidence, security, identity, sense of belonging and competence through our faith, belief and trust in Jesus Christ, and not from the opinions of others.

The more we understand who we are in Christ, the less reliant we become on the approval and criticism of others. This freedom from worldly judgement allows us to better see the truth in constructive criticism and how we can apply it to our lives.

*What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*  
-Romans 8:31-32 (ESV)

With this scripture in our heart and God by our side, we can receive tough feedback and criticism as an opportunity for growth in what God has given us through others. Then, we can begin the process of discerning what from the criticism can be taken with us and applied to our life and what we can let go of and give to God.

**How does the strength in your faith help you to deal with your critics and receive constructive criticism? What is one area you can improve on to care less about what others think and more about your identity in Christ and relationship with God?**

## READ |

While others can be critical of us, for many, it is hard to see our own critical spirit. The desire to help others, or, to get validation, can make our criticisms feel justified. But just like the fictional vampire characters on TV, most critics cannot see themselves in the mirror.

*“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”*  
-Luke 6:41 (NIV)

We can be so busy judging the monsters we see in others that we cannot see the monster growing in ourself. One of the best ways to begin resolving a conflict is to admit your part in the problem. This can humble you and allow change to begin.

*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*  
-Luke 6:37 (NIV)

Therefore, we must try our best to compassionately **hold up the mirror** to ourselves and to others by overlooking offenses in order to see what is really going on. We cannot love the critical people in our life when we are holding on to our own resentment towards them. We must reconcile and forgive instead of judge and condemn.

**Which of the two verses speaks to you the most? Is there anyone critical in your life that you need to choose to forgive to free you from resentment?**

## READ |

When we turn away from the world and the approval of others to focus on the approval of God, we put a target on our back. If they criticized Jesus and they criticized the apostles, they will criticize us.

*So then, let us stop judging one another. Instead, you should decide never to do anything that would make others stumble or fall into sin. -Romans 14:13 (GNT)*

The critical spirit of the enemy is alive and well in the world, but we follow the Son of God who died on the cross to save us from the sins of the world and covers us with his forgiveness, grace and mercy. So, we are called as his disciples not to break down others in judgement but to build them up with encouragement.

*Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. -1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)*

**Be honest, what is one area you find yourself being overly critical or judgmental? Share one person you can encourage and build up this week?**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Evaluate the critical people and spirits working in your life and choose to:

- Better **respond to criticism by not responding, not avenging and being spirit led.**
- Better **receive criticism by being grounded in your identity in Christ.**
- **Forgive the sins and hurts of your critics and look in the mirror for your own.**
- **Build up others in Christ instead of breaking them down in judgement.**
- **Improve your relationships by fasting and praying with New Hope Windward in our *21 Prayers for Healthy Relationships Starting August 28th!***



Scan the QR Code with your phone or device to Download the YouVersion App version of the study or download our church's material at [nhww.org](http://nhww.org)

## CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace and mercy to forgive my sins and heal me from my hurts. I pray a blessing over all the critics in my life, that they hear your voice and find comfort in your embrace. Help me to guard my heart against those who would want to break me down and build me up even stronger in who you made me to be in Christ. Lead me in my relationships and help me in my conflicts. In Jesus' name, amen.



## Make Time to be in God's WORD

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### Here's an example:

**S:** *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

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**O:** Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

**A:** Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." --Romans 2:5 (NIV)***

### **Day 2:**

***"For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."***  
***--Ecclesiastes 12:14 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?"***  
***--James 4:12 (NIV)***

### **Day 4:**

***"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge."***  
***--2 Timothy 4:1 (NIV)***

### **Day 5:**

***"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books."***  
***--Revelation 20:12 (NIV)***

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## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **AVOID TALKING or TEACHING.** Small groups are designed for everyone to share and grow together.

## Week 3: Drained by Controlling People

### ICEBREAKER

What is one thing around the house that you prefer to be done your way?

### INTRODUCTION

We were made in God's image and in that image we have all the power we need to live a blessed, purposeful and productive life. However, there are times people can display relational vampire traits of being controlling. Do you have any manipulative and controlling people in your life? Maybe they're a control freak, or occasionally controlling. When this happens, it can suck the life out of us. It can drain our joy, happiness and energy. Today we will learn how to love those who can be controlling.

## READ |

It is important with relational vampires to look at the why behind their actions. Relational vampires are rarely acting with malicious intent or the desire to hurt you. Sometimes they're just insecure or needy. Sometimes their past hurt and trauma causes them to be protective by being controlling. Sometimes they're trying to get us to do what they think we should do with our lives. And if we don't, these people can whine and pout.

Whatever the reasons are behind their desire to control others, these relational vampires will often do whatever it takes for them to stay in control. Two of the most common weapons used by controllers are Threats & Guilt:

**THREATS:** You better do this or you will be regret it. Threats are often in the form of "or else" statements: "You better do what I say "or else" I will leave you."

**GUILT:** They may say it, or they at least imply it. *"After all I've done for you, you won't do this one thing for me. I mean, I thought we were friends, and you won't even do this. You call yourself a Christian. What kind of Christian are you anyway?"*

These tactics utilize fear and shame to get what they desire. Scripture teaches us that love and fear are incompatible so in order to better love our controllers we must identify and resist the fear they try to push our way.

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. -1 John 4:18 (NIV)*

**Discuss a time when you someone else was being controlling through the use of threats or guilt. Please do not mention their name.**

## READ |

The greek word for control is Egkrateia or Enkrateia from the Greek ἐγκράτεια which translates too "in power" (en, "in" + krátos, "power"). So when we talk about controllers, we are talking about people who can exert control over you through their actions. This is not always a bad thing as God has given parents the responsibility to steward this authority and power with their children. The same is true for bosses who are in power over their employees and pastors/leaders who are meant to be in power of the church they manage.

*Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. -Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)*

The danger doesn't come from those in power where it is justified, appropriate and/or agreed upon. It comes from those whose desires can be selfishly motivated or even

rooted in fear or sin. Peter, who loved and is loved by Jesus was tempted by this desire to control when he tried to be in power over Jesus' mission on earth.

*Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. “**Never, Lord!**” he said. “**This shall never happen to you!**”*  
-Matthew 16:22 (NIV)

Peter was consumed by his own selfish desires for Jesus to be with him and didn't want Jesus to leave and be killed. In that concern, he unintentionally tries to take control of the situation. Sometimes we can all try to control the circumstances of others to favor our own desires for them, rather than trusting that God has them there for a reason.

***Like Peter, have you or someone you know tried to control another because of concerns for them? Thinking back, what do you believe was the motivation for trying to control their circumstances? (Ex. Fear, Obligation, Selfishness, Insecurity, Etc.)***

## **READ |**

There is one thing that every controlling person has in common. Are you ready for it? **Every controlling person has someone who allows it.** So, even though the person who is doing the controlling has a problem. We become a large part of that problem when we wrongly allow it to happen.

When a person is being selfishly controlling, we need to lovingly establish and communicate **healthy boundaries** for the relationships. This is what Jesus did when Peter became controlling. He not only recognized that Peter's desires to control were self focused but he quickly set the boundaries and drew a line in the sand.

*Jesus turned and said to Peter, “**Get behind me, Satan!** You are a stumbling block to me; **you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”***  
-Matthew 16:23 (NIV)

Jesus loved Peter by drawing a strong and healthy boundary in the moment, to stop his attempts at controlling the relationship in their tracks. Then, He took the time to explain why. Many times controllers do not even know what they are doing, or why. So, how do we as followers of Christ love those who intentionally or unintentionally try to control and manipulate us in **sinful ways**? At times, we will need to summon the courage to graciously tell them what they are doing, how it is making us feel and why it is making us feel that way. Often, our love is best shown by calling out controlling actions.

**Is there someone you need to graciously draw a line in the sand with to establish a healthy boundary with them? (Ex. I love you but I won't let you threaten me or heap guilt on me. Please do not mention their name. )**



## READ I

The fact is, we are created in God's image which means we have free will to choose our actions and control our own plans and purposes. That freedom can make us think we are able to control and change others, but the truth is we can't, only God can.

It is natural to want the best for ourselves and for others, the fall comes when we start to think that we can control the outcomes. This is how we start to "play God" and just as it was the downfall of Lucifer, it can be the downfall of us in our relationships **because we do not make good Gods**. Instead of being Gods we are called to be disciples of Christ.

*Then Jesus said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. -Luke 9:23 (NIV)*

Jesus came to show us a better way, that in submission to God through Him we will be given new life to discover the great purposes He has planned. When we start denying our desires and the desires of others to trust in God, He will steer us into all we deserve. With God in control of our lives, we walk in a sunlight where no vampires can prosper.

**Do you struggle with "playing God" in some of your relationships by trying to control the outcome? How can you start to submit to God and follow Christ in these areas to get the blessings you deserve?**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, look to see the why behind the controlling vampires in your life.

- Process with God if the power they have over you in your life is appropriate or if it is motivated by selfish desires.
- Make plans to draw some healthy boundaries and draw the lines in the sand with those that are draining you.
- Take time to reflect and make sure you aren't playing God with others to fulfill your own desires.
- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

## CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Father God, thank you for creating me with all the power I need to be successful, happy and live a purpose driven life. Thank you for giving me the strength in your Word to rebuke those who would rather have me follow their will over yours. Speak life into my relationships to help me identify the vampires in my life so I can begin to build healthy and secure boundaries. I submit my life over to your care, knowing that you will shepherd me into all that I could want and deserve. In Jesus' name, amen.



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## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."***  
***--Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)***

### **Day 2:**

***"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."***  
***--Colossians 3:12-13 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,***  
***--Titus 2:12 (ESV)***

### **Day 4:**

***For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.***     ***--2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV)***

### **Day 5:**

***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.***  
***--Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)***

# RELATIONAL VAMPIRES

LOVING THE PEOPLE WHO  
SUCK THE LIFE OUT OF YOU



## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.** While not everyone will be ready or willing to help lead or answer questions, participating and reading God's word with others will help build confidence in each member and the group. Encourage all members to read sections and/or scriptures aloud for the group.

## Week 4: Drained by Liars & Hypocrites

### ICEBREAKER

Who is your favorite screen or stage actor of all time?

### INTRODUCTION

One of the number one complaints Non-Christians have about Christians is they're all a bunch of hypocrites. They say one thing but do and live another way. In essence, it's a form of lying. None of us are immune from being tempted to tell white lies or full on lies. Nothing breaks our trust and burns our relational bridges more than lying. Today we will talk about hypocrites. Christ will be our example as we look at ways to approach hypocrisy in the church and in our relationships with a lens of prayer, wisdom and humility.

## READ I

The greek word for hypocrite is hypokrites, which means “an actor.” The term "hypokrites" was used to describe a person who played a character in a theatrical performance wearing masks to portray different characters. Hypocrites wear "masks" in their relationships to pretend to be one thing when in reality they are living as another.

What are some common ways people may exhibit hypocritical behaviors? Expecting honesty yet being untruthful. Expecting people to be punctual yet being late. Criticizing and oversharing, yet doing the same. Expecting colleagues to work hard while slacking off. Advising others on money management while having significant debt and spending recklessly. Criticizing others for seeking validation on social media while doing the same thing yourself. Advocating healthy eating while eating unhealthy. Promoting being generous to God, yet rarely contributing or volunteering.

It's important to recognize these potential behaviors not only in others but ourselves and strive to align our actions with God's word. How did Jesus respond to hypocrisy?

*"Woe to you... you hypocrites...In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside, you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."*

*-Matthew 23:27-28 (NIV)*

In Matthew 23, Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees over and over. He accuses them of putting on an outward display of righteousness and holiness to impress others, but internally they were filled with hypocrisy and evil intentions.

***Think about a time when you or another person displayed some type of hypocritical behavior. How did it make you feel? (Please don't mention names of people)***

## READ I

The word hypocrite is used 31 times in the bible and 7 times just in the book of Matthew. Jesus had no tolerance for hypocrisy and was vocal about the importance of obeying God's word.

*Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

*-1 John 2:4-6 (NIV) -*

When actions do not match the words, we can jump to assumptions that may hurt long-term believers and new believers who are still learning what it means to be a follower of Christ.

When approaching believers, the last thing we want to do is accuse them of being wrong or bad. We must be careful and compassionate to evaluate the situation and ourselves to avoid any condemnation. The best example of this is Jesus who in *John 8* approaches a woman on public trial.

*And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”* -John 8:7 (ESV)

We are all sinners. When we see hypocritical behavior, let's first examine ourselves and be honest about our own shortcomings. Later, Jesus approaches the woman after all the accusers had left and asked if she had been condemned.

She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” -John 8:11 (ESV)

Jesus understood that humility, gentleness, and compassion would be freeing to the woman and set her on a path towards a new life of faith and hope.

**Have you ever been accused or accused someone of not being true to the faith? How would a more compassionate and respectful approach have helped the situation?**

## **READ |**

There will be times when we must approach and attempt to restore a believer from their hypocrisy. When we do, approach them humbly and gently with grace, truth and love.

*Dear brothers, if a Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help him back onto the right path, remembering that next time it might be one of you who is in the wrong.* -Galatians 6:1 (TLB)

Like the fictional vampire characters on TV, hypocrites can hypnotize themselves into believing their own lies and blocking out uncomfortable memories. We must approach them biblically with the principles of *Matthew 18:15*: first individually, if they still cannot see, then with 2 or 3 witnesses, and if they are still blind bring it to church leadership.

**Think of a time someone repeatedly lied to you or would promise to do something that never came to fruition. How did you respond and what do you think you could have done better to emulate God's grace, humility, gentleness and love?**

## READ I

It can be hard and life-draining to love the hypocrites in our lives, but God calls us to love one another, even our enemies. He wants us to recognize our own tendencies towards hypocritical behaviors.

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! **First clean the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside may become clean as well**.*

-Matthew 23:25-26 (NIV)

Remember what it was like when we were full of sin and the peace we found in the forgiveness and love of Christ. None of us are immune to sin. May we remember when we see hypocritical behaviors, that there is a little pharisee living in each of us, just waiting to grow up. Jesus calls us to love from the inside out. That starts with **forgiveness, which does not excuse wrongdoing, but releases us from the burden of resentment**. This will allow us to maintain a spirit of love and reconciliation as we lead others in repenting and receiving forgiveness.

**When was the last time you cleaned your cup from the inside out? Is there anyone you need to forgive and lovingly confront? If so, please don't mention their name.**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, we will address things "mask off" by doing the following:

- look for anything you are keeping concealed from your friends and loved ones and pray for the courage to bring it to light.
  - Practice compassion and prayerful confrontation toward those that appear to be in sin.
  - Focus on loving, forgiving and cleaning from the inside out.
  - Finish the *21 Prayers for Healthy Relationships* and commit to start a new prayer guide.
- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

## CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank you for everything Jesus has taught me about hypocrisy. Give me the strength and courage to examine my own ways and bring to light any sin I am keeping underneath the surface. Help me to know when to overlook sins in others and when to lovingly confront them. Bless all those suffering silently in the sin of their hypocrisy, help me to be a clean vessel to love and guide them in forgiving themselves and returning to You and who you made them to be, In Jesus' name, amen.



## Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S** - Scripture
- O** - Observation
- A** - Application
- P** - Prayer

### Here's an example:

**S:** *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

*--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)*

**O:** Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

**A:** Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."***  
**--Ephesians 4:25 (NIV)**

### **Day 2:**

***"The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked make themselves a stench and bring shame on themselves."***  
**--Proverbs 13:5 (NIV)**

### **Day 3:**

***"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit"***  
**--Psalm 51:10-12 ((NRSV)**

### **Day 4:**

***"There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community."***  
**--Proverbs 6:16-19 (NIV)**

### **Day 5:**

***"No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence."***  
**--Psalm 101:7 (NIV)**

# RELATIONAL VAMPIRES

LOVING THE PEOPLE WHO  
SUCK THE LIFE OUT OF YOU



## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **SHARE BREAKTHROUGHS.** 21 Days of Prayer and 3 Day Fast can have profound impacts on believers. As time permits, give your group the opportunity to share what God has revealed to them through their obedience and faithfulness in these challenges. Encourage them to let God lead in pursuing what has been revealed.

## Week 5: Resolving Conflicts with Relational Vampires - Pt 1

### ICEBREAKER

What is your favorite movie that has a happy ending?

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most important skills we need to learn in life is conflict resolution; how to resolve conflicts peacefully and how to restore or reconcile strained or broken relationships. If we don't learn to apply these skills it will not only affect our relationship with others, but also with God. This week, we will begin to look at 7 biblical principles that promote reconciliation and healing. As we apply these principles to our lives, we can become peacemakers, resolving conflicts with the relational vampires in our lives.



## READ I

When we deal with relational vampires, conflicts can occur. Often, it always seems easier to just avoid the conflict and make excuses to "not make things harder than they are". We can say things like, "I don't want to make waves", "It is what it is" or "I am taking one for the team". While scripture does say we need to forgive others and at times overlook the offense (*Proverbs 19:11*), there are times we need to deal with conflict. Here are three important reasons why we need to deal with the conflict instead of avoiding it.

**It Blocks My Relationship with God.** When we let fear, anxiety and resentment take hold of our lives through the conflict we have with others, it reveals how much we really love God.

*If anyone says "I love God," but keeps on hating his brother, he is a liar; for if he doesn't love his brother who is right there in front of him, how can he love God whom he has never seen?*  
-1 John 4:20 (TLB)

**It Affects God's Forgiveness Towards Me.** One of the conditions Jesus gave us for approaching him in prayer is ensuring we have forgiven others. Unforgiveness turns the faucet of God's forgiveness off towards us.

*"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."* -Mark 11:25 (NIV)

**It Limits God's Blessings In my life.** If we respond to others with insults and retaliation, it limits God's blessings. On the other hand, God will bless us when we don't retaliate and insult others.

*Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, **pay them back with a blessing**. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing.*  
-1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

**Share with the group the excuse you most tell yourself to avoid conflict (or choose one from the first paragraph you relate to most). Which of the reasons given to address conflict is most important to you and how does it motivate you to address unresolved conflicts with the relational vampires in your life?**

Starting on the next page, we will begin going through the 7 biblical principles that we should apply to our lives to start making changes toward reconciliation and restoration in the relationships that drain us and are often filled with conflict.

## READ |

**1. MAKE THE FIRST MOVE!** The first step to reconciling a relationship is to make the first move. Don't wait on somebody else. You take the initiative. Even if it was their fault, God expects us to make the first move.

*"If you're standing before the altar in the Temple, giving an offering to God, and you suddenly remember someone has something against you, leave your offering there beside the altar. **Go at once and first be reconciled to that person.** Then come and offer your gift to God."*  
-Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT)

Jesus uses the example of someone bringing an offering at the Temple, which was a common practice in Jewish worship. He suggests that if, while in the act of worship, someone remembers that another person has something against them, they should pause their worship and prioritize reconciliation. You don't delay.

**Share a time when you lovingly made the first move to resolve a conflict and how it ended up better than you imagined? If you can't think of an example, share what's keeping you from making the first move. Please don't mention names.**

## READ |

**2. ASK GOD FOR WISDOM.** This is the second step to reconciling a relationship. Just like preparing for a physical fight such as boxing, motivation alone isn't enough to get us into fighting shape. We need to exercise and prepare ourselves to be the best vessel possible for love, righteousness and forgiveness before we step into the ring. Luckily, we have the best trainer and coach the world has ever known; Jesus Christ.

*If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask Him and He will gladly tell you...*  
-James 1:5 (TLB)

As you prepare to address a conflict, pray, "God, I need your help. I need you to fill me with your love and help me prepare what I'm going to say, where to say it and when to say it." You find a time to meet with them when it's good for them. Not when you're tired. Four important, biblical ways we can train to prepare for God's wisdom in our life are to:

- Do S.O.A.P devotionals daily;
- Attend Church weekly;
- Participate in Small Group Routinely; and
- Fast and pray purposefully.

**How does it make you feel to know Jesus is in your corner to help prepare you for conflict with others? In which way can you better commit to seeking His wisdom?**

## READ |

**3. ADMIT YOUR PART IN THE PROBLEM.** When you meet with the person you have conflict with, begin by sharing your part in the problem. This requires us to reflect on our part in the fault to identify how and why we may be feeding the conflict. Even if the conflict is 99.9% their fault, find something to confess. You can probably find something that was your fault. Maybe it was defensiveness, or raising your voice or making wrong assumptions.

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*  
-James 4:1 (NIV)

This verse acknowledges that fights and quarrels are often rooted in human desires. James encourages us to self-reflect and examine our own hearts and motives in our conflicts. Admitting our part in the problem is arguably challenging as it requires us to humble ourselves and admit our part in the problem. The great news is that when we do, we can lean on God in those areas to make our weaknesses our strength in Him.

**Share a time where you admitted your part in the problem or another did in a conflict with you? How did it help?**

**Also, discuss how doing this series with others has been a blessing and if you would like to continue to meet with this small group after the final week of the series. If so, discuss where, who will continue to attend and others you can invite to attend.**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Next week we will share the remaining 4 steps to reconciling a relationship but for this week, this is what you can prepare to do.

**1. MAKE THE FIRST MOVE**

**2. ASK GOD FOR WISDOM**

**3. ADMIT YOUR PART IN THE PROBLEM**

- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

**CLOSE IN PRAYER:** Father God, you know how conflicts can make me miserable. Please help me to pave the way to reconcile with the person I'm having conflict with. Help me to make the first move to set up a time to talk with them. I ask for your wisdom in when, where, and how to lead that meeting. Help me to be humble and admit my part in the problem. Please shower me with your presence, your wisdom and love for this attempt to resolve the conflict. Bring healing to our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.



## Make Time to be in God's WORD

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**O:** Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

**A:** Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."***

***--1 John 3:3 (NIV)***

### **Day 2:**

***"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart."***

***--1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***"Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."***

***--2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)***

### **Day 4:**

***"Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."***

***--2 Timothy 2:21 (NIV)***

### **Day 5:**

***"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."***

***--1 John 1:7 (NIV)***

# RELATIONAL VAMPIRES

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## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY.** Communicate in advance when you will be unable to attend by either calling and/or texting your host or responding to the zoom email invitation by accepting or declining. This will help your host to plan accordingly especially if it is an in person small group gathering.

## Week 6: Resolving Conflicts with Relational Vampires - Pt 2

### ICEBREAKER

What is something you weren't good at to start, but after practicing you became good at?

### INTRODUCTION

Resolving conflicts and reconciling problem relationships is not an easy process. Often it will take persistence and perseverance to overcome trust and communication barriers in order to get to the point of change. This is because we cannot change anyone, only ourselves and how we view the problem. This week we will work through the remaining of the seven biblical principles for reconciling our relationships so we can be as equipped as possible to continue in faith through resolving conflicts with relational vampires.

## READ |

**4. LISTEN FOR THEIR HURT & PERSPECTIVE.** God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason; we should always listen twice as much as we speak. When in conflict with relational vampires, one of the best weapons we have is our ability to actively listen. When we have ears to hear the emotion behind the words coming out of their mouth, we can uncover their needs, hurts and interests to better understand their perspective.

*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*  
-Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

The more we look at the conflict from their perspective, the more prepared we can be to guide them to Jesus and allow Him to heal them from the inside out. This doesn't mean it will be easy and a key part of active listening is asking the right questions. We must always be willing to dig deeper to understand where to put our actions and efforts.

*The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.*  
-Proverbs 18:17 (ESV)

**Do you believe that more is solved by talking about other's issues or by listening and asking questions about them? Share one thing that helps you be a better listener.**

## READ |

**5. SPEAK THE TRUTH TACTFULLY!** The truth hurts! Especially when it is used to call out a defect of character or a problem we see in others. That is why we must be good stewards of the truth God reveals to us about others. We must be constructive in our speech not destructive.

*...we must bear the "burden" of being considerate of the doubts and fears of others—of those who feel these things are wrong. Let's please the other fellow, not ourselves, and do what is for his good and thus build him up in the Lord. -Romans 15:1-2 (TLB)*

Paul's message about our obligation to be tactful in responding to people we don't agree with can help us in our conflicts. It doesn't mean that hard truths do not need to be spoken. It means that we must be considerate in our speech and actions so that our messages can be received. It's not just about what we say, it's how we say it. When we go into conflicts focused on being "right" we can please ourselves but hurt others. Instead, we should speak truth in love for their good, to build them up in Christ.

**Discuss a time someone hurt you with careless words in a conflict just to be "right". How can you be a better peacemaker when speaking hard truths to others?**

## READ |

**6. FIX THE PROBLEM, NOT THE BLAME!** Much like modern medicine, we will often seek comfort from the symptoms of our relationship problems instead of digging in to diagnose the root cause. When we are in conflict with our relational vampires and just keep addressing the blame, the root problem can grow and bitterness can spread.

*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. -Hebrews 12:14-15 (NIV)*

This scripture reminds us to seek holiness by honoring God in how we treat friends, neighbors, spouse, children, and even enemies. When we are busy fixing the blame instead of trying to fix the problem, conflicts remain unresolved. Taking our focus off of God and His grace allows for bitter roots to grow in our lives which prolong the conflict. Instead, be a peacemaker fixing the problem instead of just fixing the blame.

**How has focusing on blame instead of the solutions to the problem in a relationship made it worse? How can being a peacemaker and acting more holy in our conflicts help you to fix the problem instead of the blame?**

## READ |

**7. FOCUS ON RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION.** The final key to reconciling conflicts is the ministry of reconciliation that God has given every Christian. God reconciled us to him and he's given us the responsibility to do our best to reconcile with others.

*For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" -2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (NLT)*

Reconciliation means we've buried the hatchet where we choose to not hold on to the resentments and hurts. *Resolution means we resolve every disagreement and that isn't going to always happen.* The truth is, there are some things in your relationship, where you're just never going to agree. But you can disagree without being disagreeable. We can walk hand in hand together without seeing eye to eye. That's called maturity. That's the ministry of reconciliation God has given us.

**Discuss a time when you chose to forgive and focused on reconciliation instead of trying to resolve every disagreement you had with the person. How did it help?**

## READ |

God has already done all the work and given us all the tools to be peacemakers in our relationships. We just have to follow Jesus and put into practice His teachings. That means becoming a disciple, and here at New Hope Windward that is part of our vision for you. Here are 5 ways you can continue to grow in Christ to take on all your conflicts:

- **SUNDAY SERVICES:** Attend church in-person and invite friends, family and maybe even your relational vampires to share in the messages and the blessings.
- **SELF-FEEDING:** Feed yourself God's Word by reading it daily. It allows God to speak to you to guide and encourage you.
- **SMALL GROUPS:** Actively participate in regular small group(s) to grow in your faith and be accountable, and receive prayer and support for life's struggles.
- **SERVE** alongside other believers in a ministry at church to develop your spiritual gifts and experience the joy that God provides when we serve him.
- **STEWARDSHIP:** Tithe and be a good steward of God's resources, understanding that we can never out give God and he will always provide for our needs.

The stronger you build your foundation on Christ, the weaker the tactics of relational vampires become in your life. The more room we give to Him, the less room there is for relationships that try to take us away from His peace.

**Which of the 5 ways above will you commit to trying this season? Discuss your Small Group plans for the future. Name one thing you will take with you from this series.**

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

**Focus on the process and what it means to apply the remaining steps:**

- **4. LISTEN FOR THEIR HURT & PERSPECTIVE.**
- **5. SPEAK THE TRUTH TACTFULLY!**
- **6. FIX THE PROBLEM NOT THE BLAME!**
- **7. FOCUS ON RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION.**
- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

## CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Father God, thank you for your continued covering, grace and guidance in my relationships. Please help me to practices living out your principles to reconciling conflict in relationships. Help me to *Make the First Move, to Ask You For Help* in how to reconcile. To *Admit My Part In The Problem* and *Listen For Their Hurt & Perspective*. Guide me in *Speaking the Truth Tactfully* and focus on *Fixing The Problem, Not The Blame*. And to *Focus On Reconciliation, Not Resolution*. In Jesus' name, Amen.





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**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."***

***--Colossians 3:15 (NIV)***

### **Day 2:**

***"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."***

***--Psalm 34:14 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."***

***Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."***

***--James 3:17-18 (NIV)***

### **Day 4:**

***Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.***

***--Luke 6:31 (NASB1995)***

### **Day 5:**

***"When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them."***

***--Proverbs 16:7 (NIV)***



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