

Growing Deeper

The Nine Paths: Finding Your Unique Approach to Growth, Relationships and Spirituality

Week Seven: *The Path of Knowledge*

Proverbs 3:5-6

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. How would you define “knowledge”?
2. What positives and negatives come to mind when you think about the path of knowledge?
3. Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What does God’s Word advise his people to do?
4. Read Romans 11:33-36. How do human knowledge and understanding differ from God’s?
5. When in your life have you experienced God’s knowledge and wisdom being superior to your own?
6. End your FIFTEEN in worship as you meditate on the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Read Romans 11:33-36 and Proverbs 3:5-6. If God’s knowledge is beyond tracing out, how can we trust it?
8. What does it mean to trust in the LORD with **all** your heart?
9. What resources does God offer to share his knowledge and give us understanding? (see Acts 17:11, John 14:25-27, Hebrews 1:1-3)
10. What does God’s Word mean when it says, “In all your ways submit to him?”
11. Why should people do that?
12. How can people do that?
13. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you take advantage of the resources he has given. Ask God to grow

your ability to trust him and submit to him.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

14. Does it bother you when there is not an “acceptable” explanation for something?

15. What are some mysterious or unexplainable things about God?

16. How do God’s mysteries affect your ability to trust God?

17. How does your struggle for answers affect your ability to trust people?

18. Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 13:2. How would your relationships change if you prioritized love over knowledge?

19. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to show you where your demand for knowledge has been a barrier between you, God and the people around you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Reread Proverbs 3:5-6. What image comes to mind when you read the phrase, “he will make your paths straight”?

21. What does this phrase mean in terms of life experience?

22. What are the benefits of “straight paths”?

23. How would believing this truth help you let go of the compulsion to solve problems and understand everything?

24. Where do you need a “straight path?”

25. End your FIFTEEN asking God to align your ways to his and put you on a straight path.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. Proverbs 18:15 says it is discerning and wise to seek knowledge. What is the warning in Ecclesiastes 1:18?

27. Why do you think Solomon said this?

28. What other warnings would you add to the pursuit of knowledge?

29. Read John 14:6. What does Jesus say about himself?

30. What is Jesus offering those on the quest for knowledge?

31. How does this help you trust God and people?

32. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, consider all that it means to trust in God's revealed wisdom through Jesus. Pray accordingly.

Week Eight: *The Path of Loyalty*

John 16:32-33

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. To begin your first FIFTEEN of the week, read John 16:32-33. How do you think Jesus' words in verse 32 made his disciples feel?
2. Jesus' disciples likely considered themselves very loyal to him. But after his words in verse 32, they may have felt challenged, hurt and even angry. How do you feel when someone questions your loyalty or even challenges it?
3. What qualities come to mind when you think of loyalty?
4. Those who are most loyal are often extremely committed, almost to a fault. But it's because they are motivated by fear and the need for security. Does that describe you? Why or why not?
5. To finish your FIFTEEN for today, spend some time contemplating who and what you are most loyal to. Are you proud of those loyalties? Then, pray that God would help you most value and be most loyal to who and what he wants for your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

6. Do you typically think of loyalty as a good quality to have? Why or why not?
7. When does loyalty often cross the line and become unhealthy or dangerous?
8. Read John 16:32-33 again. Does anything new catch your attention this time?
9. When you have trouble at work, home, or somewhere else, how does it affect your attitude? Do you embrace the difficulty, or do you become negative?
10. One Christian author paraphrases verses 32 and 33 of John 16 like this: "Within an hour you will be running like a bunch of frightened sheep. You say you know who I am. You say you understand that I came from God and that I know all things. But do you know that within an hour's time you will be so confused and so uncertain of what is happening that you will run away and leave Me alone? And yet I'll not be alone. My security won't be threatened in that hour, for the Father is with Me. I say this to you in order that you might know the kind of peace I have. It is not based on what happens, or even on my understanding of what happens, but upon a trust in the One who controls what happens. I say this to you, that in Me you may have peace." Does that paraphrase help you better understand those verses? How does it make you feel?

11. To finish your FIFTEEN for today, ask God to give you the strength and ability to better embrace the difficulty when trouble comes your way. Ask him to remind you of all the ways he has blessed you when you face adversity.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

12. To begin your FIFTEEN for today, read John 16:32-33 again. Then back up a couple of chapters and read John 14:27-29. What questions arise in you as a result of these readings?

13. What do these two passages have to say about peace? What or who is the source of the peace described?

14. In both passages, Jesus says he is the only source of peace that lasts. Why is real peace a result of trust in who Jesus is?

15. What happens if your peace is reliant on your own circumstances and abilities? What happens when things don't go as planned or even fall apart?

16. As you finish your FIFTEEN for today, be honest with yourself about what or who you rely on for peace. Pray that God would help you to continue to trust in his perfect peace. And if you're currently struggling to rely on his peace, ask him to help bring you to a place where you both can and will rely on the peace that only he provides.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

17. To begin your FIFTEEN for today, read John 14:27-29 again. Does anything new catch your attention this time?

18. Think of a time when something or someone you had trusted for peace and comfort failed you. Can you recall the emotions you felt?

19. How did you respond? How did you find peace again?

20. In the moment, when you were suffering and left without peace, did the thought of God being your best and only source of peace enter your mind?

21. It's often our devotion to our tribe (our church, our denomination, our group) that is our guarantee of security. But that doesn't leave much of a role for God in your life. What or who have you been loyal to that has gotten in the way of your loyalty to God?

22. To finish your FIFTEEN for today, spend some time asking God to show you how you can better put your loyalty and trust in him as your ultimate source of peace and joy. Thank him that he is always there for you, reliable, constant and

faithful.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

23. To begin your final FIFTEEN of the week, consider what your life would look like if your true loyalty was to God. How would your life look different?

24. Think again about your own life. When does *your* loyalty often cross the line and become unhealthy or dangerous? Is it happening currently?

25. Do you think God wants you to keep living that way? Or does he have so much better in mind for you?

26. Read Colossians 3:15. What does it have to say about how God wants us to live?

27. If you can trust in the support and protection of God and know that Jesus has already overcome the world's threats, how does that affect your courage to face down any fear?

28. As you finish your FIFTEEN for today, ask God to always remind you of just how good life can be when your true loyalty is to him. Ask him to remind you of the true joy and peace that comes with that. Then, thank him again that he is always there for you and that he never fails you.

Week Nine: *The Path of Adventure*

John 10:10

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. If an unbelieving friend asked you, “What’s the purpose of faith?” or “What promise does God make to his people?” how would you answer?
2. This is a broad question, with a whole range of possible answers. What does your answer reveal about your own priorities within your faith?
3. One common modern answer to the point of faith is “to be saved.” But it’s interesting to see a different emphasis when Jesus answered the question. Look up John 10:10. Why does Jesus say that he came to earth?
4. Is his answer different than or similar to your original answer?
5. Would you say that your own life often feels “abundant” (ESV, KJV), “full” (NIV) or “rich and satisfying” (NLT)? Why or why not?
6. How does Christ’s promise affect your own goals for your faith life?
7. End your FIFTEEN by praying that Christ’s joyful promise would come true in your own life. Ask God for the abundant life he promises you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. In one scene in Monty Python and the Holy Grail, God is cranky with King Arthur: “One thing I can't stand, it's people groveling.... And don't apologize. Every time I try to talk to someone, it's 'sorry this' and 'forgive me that' and 'I'm not worthy'.... It's like those miserable Psalms—they're so depressing.” How closely would you agree with this assessment of the Psalms?
9. There are certainly some psalms for which this criticism is fair. But there are many others that aren’t like that at all! Read Psalm 145:1-9. What is the tone of this psalm?
10. Celebration is an integral part of the Christian life! What are ways that you generally celebrate God’s goodness in your life?
11. Look again at verses 4-5. What are the “works of God” in your life that you would want to make sure to tell the next generation about?

12. In what ways do you “meditate” on these wonderful acts of God? How do you keep yourself mindful of the things he’s done that are worth celebrating?
13. Commit for the rest of the week to taking a few minutes of each day to write down something that you’re thankful for God doing in that day. See how this habit of celebration makes a difference in your life!
14. Begin this new habit by finishing your FIFTEEN by praying and giving thanks to God for something good that he’s done in your life this week.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. If someone offered you a month-long, all-expenses-paid vacation, but you had to go by yourself and be alone the whole time, would you do it? Why or why not?
16. Alone time is good and necessary, but for most people, such an opportunity would lose its luster if it couldn’t be shared with someone. What do you think it is about vacations and positive experiences that is better when shared?
17. The Bible underscores this truth. Read Isaiah 25:6-9. What metaphor does this passage use for God’s promised salvation?
18. What would you say are the key ingredients for a *good* feast?
19. How often do you and your Christian friends make time to simply celebrate together—with food and drink—the good things God is doing in your life?
20. How can you make plans to share and celebrate God’s goodness with someone else in your life? Make plans to create a communal “feast” opportunity with somebody important to you.
21. Conclude your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that God would bless your time of celebration and give you ever more reasons to celebrate his goodness to you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Think about when you’re in group settings. Have you ever felt the burden to be “the life of the party” or to “fill awkward silences”? Why is that?
23. Believe it or not, Jesus himself struggled with this as well. Read Mark 1:32-39. What were the crowds demanding of him?

24. What did Jesus do in order to recharge from having to be “on” for the crowd? How usual of a practice was this for him? (See Luke 5:16)
25. What is the value in getting off by yourself, away from everyone else except for God?
26. How easy is this to do in the current rhythms of your life?
27. Make a plan to carve out a time/place for some solitude each day, even if it’s only a few minutes in the bathroom!
28. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to show up in a big way in the spaces of silence and solitude that you create.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. When was the last time you actually felt “hunger”?
30. Jim Gaffigan claims he hasn’t actually been hungry in 12 years! (<https://youtu.be/dnueGz3-xUw?t=41>) How well do you relate to his claim?
31. Skim Matthew 6:1-18. In this passage, Jesus reflects on three different spiritual disciplines. What are they?
32. Two of them are relatively common in Christian practice, but the third, fasting, is relatively unusual these days. Why might you guess that is?
33. But what does Jesus say the point of fasting is?
34. What would it look like to intentionally fast in order to help your focus on God? Try a few days’ worth of “half-day” fasting. Each time you feel a hunger pang, use it to turn your thoughts to what God is doing in your life.
35. Close your FIFTEEN by praying for God to work through your fasting moments to reveal himself more clearly to you.