

Growing Deeper *State of Mind*

Week One: *State of the Mind* *Romans 12:1-2*

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Congratulations on deciding to take a few minutes with God today! Sometimes one of the biggest challenges is just deciding to make this a priority, and there are always things that get in the way. What are three things competing with your attention to God and his Word right now?
2. Can you allow God to be powerful over everything, even over those three things, for the next fifteen minutes? If you are struggling to let them go, turn them over to him in prayer.
3. Our world is busy and many things compete for our attention all the time. Even in a moment where we would have a “break,” we fill the time with distractions on our phone, television, or radio. Read Romans 12:2. What is Paul’s answer to this?
4. What are some activities that “renew” your mind? Some people enjoy walking alone in nature, while others would enjoy being at a crowded zoo with lots of people. Some might enjoy creating a piece of art, while others might complete some household project. Your “renewing activity” may be different than anyone else’s, so spend some time considering what renews your mind and jot down a list.
5. How can you make time for a renewing activity this week? It might be today, or you might need to schedule it for later in the week, but consider how you can connect with God in this way and write a short plan to make it happen!
6. Look again at Romans 12:1-2. In the second half of the verse Paul says that the mind renewing happens so that you can test and approve what God’s will is. Those three things that you set aside at the beginning – they didn’t go away, they are just going to be reframed by looking through the lens that God provides. If you could sit down with God and discuss your three things over coffee right now, what would he say?
7. End your FIFTEEN by asking God in prayer to help you accomplish your plan. Try to remember when you get frustrated to ask God to renew your mind so that you can see through to his eyes. Then, come back tomorrow for a larger description of what these verses can mean for your life!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read Romans 12:1-2. Paul urges his readers to be “living sacrifices.” That implies that you continue to be sacrificed as you live for Christ rather than die for him. Where is your biggest area of sacrifice right now?
9. A smart man recommended that whenever you see the word “therefore” in the Bible, it is important to ask yourself, “What is the ‘therefore’ there for?” It is a connection between something previous and what the author wants to say next. Read Romans 11:28-36. The entire book of Romans describes the mercy of God (verses 28-32). The end of the

chapter is a description of the qualities of God, a doxology (verses 33-36). Which of these two themes better sets up the “therefore” in Romans 12:1 for you?

10. In Romans 11:33-34 it talks about the “mind of the Lord” as something that is beyond description and understanding. Why is it scary to have a God you cannot understand? Why is it comforting to know that you have a God you cannot understand?
11. Whether you are amazed by human psychology, astrophysics, quantum mechanics, microbiology, or something else, many things in our world are extremely difficult for people to understand. Is your image of God big enough to include knowing these things as well? Why or why not?
12. God’s omniscience and omnipotence should do more than impress us; they should give us strength for the individual path that each of us is on. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN in prayer before this impressive God who is full of love for you. Pray whatever is on your mind.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. Look again at Romans 12:1-2. As you are transformed by the “renewing of your mind,” you should spend some time considering the mind of God, as we did yesterday, but we should also spend some time considering ourselves and the unique mind God has created in each one of us. If you go back to the Nine Paths series from earlier this year, you may remember that people see through different lenses. The three centers are the head, heart, and gut centers. When faced with a tough decision, do you turn to your thoughts, do you listen to your heart, or do you go with your gut?
14. All of us are really a mixture of these three centers, but one may be more dominant than the others. How has your perspective been a blessing to you? How has it limited you?
15. Here are some different ways that renewing your mind may look according to the nine paths. Some may speak more to you than others, but spend some time looking to see what God would say to people on these nine paths. Which one speaks to you?
 - a. Gut Center – The challenger is someone who has a strong desire to be in control. If you are on the path of the challenger, how can you renew your mind by being vulnerable in the right situations with the right people? The peacemaker is someone who avoids conflict. If you are on the path of the peacemaker, how can you renew your mind by doing what is good rather than what is easy? The reformer is someone who has a strong desire to be correct. If you are on the path of the reformer, how can you renew your mind by seeing people and not just rules?
 - b. Heart Center – The helper is someone who has a strong desire to be needed. If you are on the path of the helper, how can you renew your mind by doing what God would have you do without any reward from others? The achiever is someone who wants to be seen as successful. If you are on the path of the achiever, how can you renew your mind by seeing how God has worked through failures? The individual has a need to be unique and special. If you are on the path of the individual, how can you renew your mind by focusing on others, not just yourself?

- c. Head Center – The observer is someone who prefers to watch rather than participate. If you are on the path of the observer, how can you renew your mind by engaging with messy situations? The loyalist is someone who is always prepared for the worst-case scenario. If you are on the path of the loyalist, how can you renew your mind by placing your faith in God and trusting the person he created you to be? The enthusiast is someone who has a need to always seek adventure and happy times. If you are on the path of the enthusiast, how can you renew your mind by embracing the sad and lonely feelings you encounter and not just the happy ones?

16. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you renew your mind in the ways that you have identified today.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

17. Read Romans 12:3-8. While 1 Corinthians 12 is the most popular passage about the church being one body of Christ with many members, Paul does talk about this concept in several other places, including here. Why is it important for us to remember that we are a member of a body?
18. There are many different kinds of Christians throughout the world, but we still describe the Church as “ONE holy, Christian, and apostolic” church according to the Nicene Creed. How have you seen the people of God unified?
19. The body of Christ is also made up of many different people with different talents and perspectives. How have you benefited from a diverse body of Christ? How have you learned from other Christians?
20. Look again at Romans 12:3. The key to a healthy view of God’s people is humility. When has humility led to mercy in your life experience?
21. How can you appreciate the gifts of other people when they are so different from your own? Do differences make it hard for you to love other people?
22. As we continue the theme of “renewing our mind” according to Romans 12:2, how do the unity and differences within the people of God affect your ability to have a new “state of mind”?
23. Conclude your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you work to be more unified with those who are different than you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

24. Think about Romans 12:2, “... be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” What would be the one thing that you would hope could improve in your life by the renewing of your mind?
25. What are some things in your life that you have tried to change and yet have been a struggle for you? Maybe there is something personally, professionally, in relationships, or something else. What has been hard to change?

26. There is a concept called “immunity to change” that describes how we often fight ourselves when it comes to changes. A person may want to quit smoking for health reasons, but it is a struggle. They are conscious about the bad things about smoking, but they are often unconscious about all the things that keep them smoking, like the way it feels to hold a cigarette, the memories they have around smoking, the relationships that they have around smoking. When you think about something you are trying to change, what are some possible unconscious factors working against you being able to make that change?

27. Once you are able to identify some of the unconscious factors preventing positive change, then you need to figure out how you will address those factors and take those into account as well. How can you address some of those factors in your own changes?

28. Ultimately, a renewing of your mind does not come with enough effort and information, but change happens with God’s help. Spend the rest of your final FIFTEEN this week thinking through at least one change you would like to make in your life and turn it over to God, including the positive and negative factors, the conscious and unconscious things that affect this change, and let God be sovereign over those situations.

Week Two: *God's Acceptance and Your Own*
Galatians 1:6-10, 13-17

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Please begin by reading Galatians 1:6-7. This week, we're going to dig into how our own self-acceptance differs from God's acceptance of us. To do this, we must first admit that our self-acceptance has been greatly impacted by how our world has taught us to view and criticize ourselves. I believe that two things are at the root of this:
 - a. We feel a need to be accepted and worthy.
 - b. We love to compare ourselves.Which one can you most relate to?

2. God created us with a tenderness and desire for connection. In order to be truly connected, we need to be accepted. The problem with this is that we live in a society that is competitive and stresses "keeping up with the Joneses." Because of this, we have often felt rejected rather than accepted. When are some times that others have made you feel unworthy or rejected?

3. Being accepted by others is good and important. However, we need to remember that the only acceptance and inclusion that matters is when we are accepted by God and included in his kingdom. How does knowing that you are loved and accepted by him change how you view yourself?

4. Another thing the world has taught us is that in order to be really accepted and loved, you need to be among the "best." What areas can you think of in which the world compares people against one another (e.g., beauty, talent, wealth, etc.)?

5. Which of these comparison traps do you fall into the most? For example, I fall into the traps of comparing my own "success" and "beauty" to others.

6. Read Psalm 139:14. What does this reveal about how God feels about you, and how he wants you to measure your worth?

7. Please finish your FIFTEEN with a prayer. Pray, "God, I thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank you for renewing my mind so that I can be filled with confidence in knowing that I am enough. Thank you for making me a part of your kingdom."

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Please read Romans 3:23-24. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we learn a lot about how God created our world. Among the last of what he created, he made Adam. Man is a unique and precious part of God's Creation. I once heard a pastor say (forgive my paraphrasing here), "God spent the first several days of Creation effectively making incredible birthday presents for man." I loved that, because it reminded me just how much God loves to amaze us with his power, glory, and love. Do you feel like your attitude toward yourself reflects just how special you are to God?

9. In Romans 3, Paul says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” There are two very important parts to these verses. The first is that we are not perfect. Please, if you have been holding on to a need to be perfect, let it go! No other person in the history of the world (except for Jesus) has been able to achieve the perfection you are laboring for. Let me be clear. God is not pleased with you because of how perfect and non-sinful you are. Have you been feeling the pressure to be perfect? How?

10. So, if God isn’t pleased with you because you are perfect, then why is he pleased with you? That question is answered by Romans 3:24: “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” God is crazy about you. So much so that he sacrificed God the Son to win you back from sin, death, and the devil. Because of this sacrifice, those that look to Jesus as Lord and Savior are made holy! God the Father looks at you and is pleased. He sees his perfect child. How does knowing this relieve the pressure to be perfect?

11. What are some simple ways that you can show this same grace to others in your everyday life?

12. As you finish out your FIFTEEN in prayer, consider praying these words: “Heavenly Father, thank you for redeeming me through your Son. Help me to remember that I am holy and precious in your sight. Help me to see others the way that you see them.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. Today, we’re going to reflect on how our past can hinder our self-acceptance. Please take some time to read Psalm 139. Yes, all of it! What stands out to you from this psalm?

14. Our past contains a lot of memories. Some of those memories bring pride, joy, and laughter. However, some parts of our past are not so wonderful. The past can make us feel ashamed, angry, remorseful, embarrassed, or downright guilty. I know this might be difficult, but what parts of your past bring up one or more of the emotions I named?

15. How do you think these parts of your past have affected your self-acceptance?

16. Read Psalm 139:1-4. This explains how God is always present, and he always knows our future. Was God surprised by any mistakes or situations from your past?

17. Recall Romans 3:23-24 from yesterday’s FIFTEEN. Have you felt that your past has defined you? How does this verse change that?

18. Psalm 139:14 says, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” You are one of his works. That means that you, despite anything from your past, are wonderful. Like the psalmist, do you know that full well?

19. Finish out your FIFTEEN with a prayer. Pray: “Jesus, thank you for defeating the devil’s lies about my past. Remind me that my past does not define who I am now, and who I will be. Help me to show others the power of healing I have found in your name.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Today, we’re going to focus on living in self-acceptance and accepting the imperfections of today. Take a minute to reflect on these lyrics from a song called “Bulletproof.”

*I used to live like I was under attack
Dodging arrows from my past
I had no hope for tomorrow
Felt so much pressure yes I thought I would crack
But now there’s no looking back
I’m moving forward ‘cuz I know..
I know You got this whole thing under control
My soul is untouchable because
You’ve already won me
My victory is not in this flesh and bone
It’s in the cross and I know
Nobody’s taking it from me*

Take a look at that first verse. Can you relate to the songwriter’s feelings about “dodging arrows from your past?” How has Jesus changed that?

21. Now, focus on the second verse. What has given the songwriter peace about his or her past, present, and future?

22. Do you believe this verse applies to you as well? How has this given you peace for today?

23. Why do you think this song is called “Bulletproof”?

24. End today’s FIFTEEN with a prayer: “Holy Spirit, thank you for your peace and presence. Thank you for giving me the power to live today knowing that I am holy and ‘bulletproof’ in You.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

25. Today, we’re going to focus on people-pleasing versus pleasing God. People-pleasing is a problem that is disguised as a virtue. Simply put, it is the ability to put others before yourself (and often, God), and the inability to say “no.” Signs of people-pleasing would be having a strong aversion to conflict and becoming too involved in activities because you have a hard time rejecting someone who needs help. You may even alter your personality or appearance because you want the acceptance of others. Do you feel you struggle with people-pleasing? How so?

26. Why do you believe people-pleasing is a struggle for so many people?

27. When writing this, I was surprised at how many verses spoke about the dangers of people-pleasing. For example, read John 5:44. Does this verse surprise you?

28. What does this verse say about the dangers of people-pleasing?

29. Read Galatians 1:10. Why do you think Paul says that if he is seeking the approval of man, he cannot be a servant of Christ?

30. The great news is, seeking the approval of a perfect, loving God is so much better than seeking the approval of finicky, sinful people! Not only that, but looking to God for your acceptance and approval, rather than people-pleasing, can actually show *others* just how good God is. Why do you think this is true?

31. Finish out your FIFTEEN by praying to God, thanking him for his acceptance and love. If you're struggling to find words, consider praying this prayer: Pray: "God, thank you for accepting and loving me, despite my shortcomings. Help me to see myself the way you see me. Help me to show others your love for them."

Week Three: *Getting Out of Your Head*
Genesis 2:4-7

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. When you think about your appearance, what's your favorite feature? Do you get compliments on your eyes, your smile, or something else? What makes that feature unique to you?
2. Read Genesis 2:4-7. How did God create man?
3. Read Psalm 139:13-16. According to these verses, how were you specifically created?
4. How does this make you feel about your best features? How does this change how you feel about your features that you are not particularly happy about?
5. It's human nature to pick apart our bodies, but according to the Bible, our bodies are an amazing gift from God, specifically designed by him. How can we use this truth to inform your opinions about your body?
6. Spend a few minutes thinking about your body, including all of the things it allows you to do, and all of the places it carries you throughout your day. Jot down the ones for which you are most grateful. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN in prayer, thanking God for blessing you with your body.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. If you stop and assess how well you've taken care of your body so far, how would you rate yourself?
8. For many of us, we take that gift for granted. Why do you think that happens?
9. Study after study shows the importance of physical care of our body on our minds. The body is more than just a vessel to carry around our spirits; the care of our body affects our minds. Think again about the way you take care of your body and how it affects your mind. In what ways do you help or hinder your state of mind with your body?
10. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12, 20-23. What will ultimately happen to our bodies?
11. Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-49. What does it mean to you to know that the body we will have ultimately will be imperishable?
12. God's grace extends beyond our spiritual salvation; his grace extends to our physical body in the resurrection as well.

He will provide us with a new imperishable body. How does this truth affect how you feel about the importance of your earthly body?

13. Before you end your FIFTEEN, spend a few moments in quiet reflection thinking about your body. Notice how it feels. The weight of your body in the chair, the tension in your muscles, any aches or pains. Don't judge your body, just notice it. Then end your FIFTEEN in prayer by thanking God for the gift of your body and to help you take the best possible care of it.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

14. Lamaze is a childbirth technique popularized in the 1950s by French obstetrician Dr. Fernand Lamaze. It uses breathing and relaxation techniques to help facilitate childbirth with less medical intervention. Lamaze is only one example of how breathing can aid relaxation when the body is under stress. Have you experienced a painful event such as childbirth or an injury and used breathing to deal with the pain in that moment? Was it instinctual, or did someone need to remind you to breathe?
15. Look again at Genesis 2:4-7. How did God give man life in verse 7?
16. Now read Job 33:4. These words were spoken by Elihu, a friend of Job. What did Elihu understand about his life?
17. What a powerful gift God has given us in our breath. God himself breathes his breath into us to give us life. How does this change how you might feel about the gift of your breath?
18. Read Numbers 27:15-17. How did Moses describe God in this scripture? What was Moses' prayer for his people?
19. Our breath not only sustains our lives and helps regulate our emotion and stress responses, it can also remind us that God is our creator and sustainer. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN thinking about your breath. Notice how it feels to breathe deeply and slowly. Then like Moses, think about God who breathed his breath in you. Remember his faithfulness in giving and sustaining your life. Then end with a prayer of gratitude.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. What's your go-to activity when you need a break? What makes that activity helpful for you?
21. Think again about this activity. Is it a healthy one, healthy to a point, or do you often over-do it? Explain your answer.
22. Sometimes, even healthy behaviors become unhealthy, especially when they are used as a way to escape our problems. What makes them become unhealthy for you?

23. One of the reasons people use unhealthy behaviors or healthy behaviors in an unhealthy way is to numb pain. Read the following verses and note what each says God does and what we do.
- a. 1 Peter 5:6-7
 - b. Psalm 55:22
 - c. Psalm 18:35
 - d. Matthew 6:25-34
24. Temporary numbing can be a tempting thing. But what God offers us is a way to find true solace and actual solutions to our needs instead of just avoiding them. End your FIFTEEN in a time of confession. Think about those time when you tried to avoid your problems instead of trusting in him for answers. Then ask him to help you to remember to turn to him first.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

25. It has been said, if you know how to worry, you know how to meditate. How good are you at worrying? Do you often ruminate on problems or do you try to avoid them?
26. Read Psalm 46:10. What does God tell us to do in these verses? Write it in your own words.
27. Being still is often easier said than done. As we read this week, focusing on the life-giving breath God has given us is one way to relax. So is meditating on God’s Word. This may sound difficult to do, but it really is as easy as worrying. There’re many ways to meditate on scripture, but here are some tips to help you spend the rest of your FIFTEEN meditating on scripture.
28. Think about the times you have worried about something. You probably thought about that problem repeatedly. Repetition can be an essential component of mediation. Pick a scripture to meditate on. Perhaps it’s Psalm 46:10 or one of the verses we looked at on Day Four. Start by reading that scripture several times slowly to yourself.
29. Now re-read that scripture again and focus on individual words of the verse. Emphasize a different word each time you read it through. How does the passage change meaning when you emphasize different words?
30. Re-read the scripture, but use your own words and examples. For instance, “For God so loved the world...” For God so loved each and every person I know...”
31. Try personalizing it with your own name and circumstance. “For God so loved me...”
32. Finally, use your scripture as a prayer. For example, “God, because you loved the world so much I know...”

Week Four: Analysis Paralysis
Psalm 25:1-7

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. What was the last big decision you had to make? Where did you go for information? How helpful was this? How dependable?
2. Read Psalm 25:1-7. Where did the psalmist look for guidance?
3. How dependable is this source, according to the psalmist?
4. Trusting God's character takes the fear out of choices. Look at verse 3. What attribute of God do you see?
5. How has God proved himself dependable or trustworthy in your life?
6. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you believe in his trustworthy guidance as you make decisions this week.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Do you ever feel like you have too many options or choices?
8. Read Psalm 25:1-7 again. What does David, the psalmist, ask God to do? Why do you think David asked God to do this?
9. What name for God does David use in verse 5?
10. Do you believe God wants to save or rescue you? What proof do you have?
11. How has God saved you in the choices you have made?
12. How does knowing you have a God who saves free you from anxiety?
13. Read Romans 8:32. End your FIFTEEN in worship and thanksgiving as you meditate on this verse.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

14. Have you ever made any bad decisions? How has this affected you? Did you think God would abandon you?

15. Read Psalm 25:1-7. Focus on verses 6 and 7. What characteristics of God are mentioned in verse 6?

16. Does this description of God in the Old Testament surprise you? Do you know any Old Testament stories of God's mercy and love?

17. David made a number of bad choices, including arranging a murder. What did God's mercy and love allow David to do?

18. How have you experienced God's mercy, love, and forgiveness?

19. Think about past bad decisions or upcoming difficult choices. End your FIFTEEN praying verses 6-7 with these in mind.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Do you ever dread making decisions? Ever want things to stay just the way they are?

21. Read Psalm 25:1-7 aloud. Reread the last phrase. What does David say about God?

22. What does it mean to say, "God is good"?

23. You may have heard, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." Do you believe this?

24. How would living as if this was true impact your daily life? How would it affect your decision-making?

25. In His goodness, God has given us resources for decision-making: His Word, His people, His Spirit. End your FIFTEEN considering which of these resources you need to seek out today.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. Has a decision ever overwhelmed or terrified you? Why?

27. How do you feel about having the freedom and power to make decisions?

28. What are the risks of having the freedom to choose?

29. We have found God to be trustworthy, a Savior, merciful, loving, and good in Psalm 25:1-7. Now look at Romans 8:28 and Proverbs 16:4. What do these tell you about God?

30. God is our safety net. He can and will save us from the worst consequences of our decisions when we ask. How does this comfort you? How will you apply it?

31. God can make a bad decision into something good. He can direct us into paths of blessing. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Bring your impending choices before him. Thank him for his character. Ask him for guidance. Listen. Pray until you feel free of anxiety, fear, and guilt. Praise him for the freedom and peace he gives.

Week Five: *Archipelagos Are Better than Islands*

James 5:13-16

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Who is your oldest friend or group of friends? What is the most memorable or significant thing you ever did together?
2. What level of sacrifice would you be willing to make for each other? Help them move? Let them stay with you in your house last-minute? Donate a kidney?
3. It's hard to overstate the benefits of having a friend or group you can rely on in deep need. Now read James 5:13-16. What are some additional benefits of a group, described in this passage?
4. Most Christians would say that they don't have this kind of group that they could go to for healing prayer or confession and forgiveness of sins. What do you think are the perceived obstacles for being in this kind of group?
5. Larry Crabb, in his book *Connecting*, says that our unwillingness to be honest and grace-filled about our sins is what hinders the kind of connection James is describing:
Scripture tells us to confess our faults to at least one other member of our community. The journey toward Christ is intended to be a group expedition where we walk together as honest strugglers who believe the endpoint is worth any hardship. We share the life of Christ together and are called to nourish that life in one another; but we must also resist the urges of sin together. We must not be alone when we enter the death experience of discovering that our flesh-inspired strategies for living no longer work. ... The obstacle to connecting (the flesh) becomes our opportunity for deeper connecting when we recognize it and mortify it together.
6. In your own words, what action do you think Crabb is recommending to us for deeper connection?
7. Who is someone that you could take a leap and risk connecting with in a deeper way? A believing friend you could attempt to trust to share some of the sinful urges or brokenness that holds you back? Make a point of reaching out to that person in a transparent and humble way.
8. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you the courage to seek the “deeper connection” that comes from honesty about our urges and brokenness with another person.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

9. If, for some reason, you suddenly had to move out of your house, how would you make that happen? Would you hire movers? Take a couple of days off work and stay up late getting it done? Ask some friends for help?
10. Larry Crabb (see Day One) thinks that one of our “sinful agendas” that prevents deeper connection is “**City-Building**—depending on our own resources to make our lives work.” How much or little do you relate to that agenda? Why?

11. Read Genesis 4:10-17. What consequence did God give to Cain?
12. As a homeless wanderer, whose resources would Cain have had to rely on to survive? How might this have restored his connection to godly community?
13. What did Cain do instead? (See verse 17.) How did this act keep him estranged from God?
14. The next time you have a crisis and your knee-jerk reaction is to rely on your own resources, what could you do differently that would leverage that crisis into an opportunity to connect with someone else? How could you ask for help in a meaningful way?
15. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying that God would show you that he wants to give you all the resources you need to thrive in life, so that you don't need to suffer through, based on self-reliance. Ask for him to help you lean on others and on his provision for you!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

16. When things in life get hard, who are the experts you tend to turn to for advice?
17. Larry Crabb (see Day One) thinks that one of our “sinful agendas” that prevents deeper connection is “**Fire-Lighting**—reducing the mystery of life to manageable categories of understanding.” Do you find that you react to uncertainty by trying to figure out the “right” ways to approach every problem?
18. Read Isaiah 50:10-11. What contrast does Isaiah describe?
19. When Fire-lighters run into a problem, their tendency is to turn to the experts to solve it. How does that limit reliance on God and others?
20. In turn, if you are “always right,” does that make others more or less likely to reach out to you for deeper connection? Why or why not?
21. Larry Crabb suggests that instead of asking “Am I right?” we should ask, “Whom do I trust?” How would this new question deepen your relationship with God and with other people?
22. This is a scary thing to pray, but use the rest of your FIFTEEN to ask that God would deepen your darkness by putting you in uncertain situations, to help you trust in him even when you don't know the right answers.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

23. In case of a hypothetical “zombie apocalypse,” how well do you think you’d do at surviving? How well prepared are you, in general, for possible future risks?

24. Larry Crabb (see Day One) thinks that one of our “sinful agendas” that prevents deeper connection is “**Wall-Whitewashing**—making it a priority to minimize risk, and protecting ourselves at all costs against whatever difficulties might frustrate our plans.” Do you find that an emphasis on safety tends to restrict the risks you take in life?

25. Read Ezekiel 13:1-16. How did the false prophets try to reassure the people?

26. How much of your well-being is derived from the illusion that things in your life are safe or predictable? If disaster struck, would it invalidate your relationship with God?

27. Is it ever “safe” to love another person wholeheartedly? Why or why not?

28. Who is someone that you have held yourself back in showing love for them in a deeper way, because of the possible risks involved? How could you make a brave, connecting choice to risk the possible repercussions of loving them in spite of uncertainty?

29. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying that God’s love would help you risk loving someone else boldly to open up the pathway for a deeper, life-giving connection.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

30. Our culture prioritizes the “pursuit of happiness.” What do you think are the benefits of such a focus? What are the possible problems?

31. Larry Crabb (see Day One) thinks that one of our “sinful agendas” that prevents deeper connection is “**Well-Digging**—making satisfaction and seeking pleasure the highest goal.” How have you prioritized pleasures in life over other priorities?

32. Read Jeremiah 2:1-13. In a nutshell, what “shocking” choice did God’s people make (see especially verses 11-13)?

33. What is the difference between the pleasures that God offers and the pleasures we try to create for ourselves?

34. How does prioritizing happiness and satisfaction keep us from deeper relationships with other people?

35. Pick an important relationship in your life. For one week, commit to not asking, “What benefit is this relationship to me?” but ask how you can prioritize the other person’s needs over your own.

36. End your final FIFTEEN this week by asking God to show you the deeper pleasure of finding purpose and joy through the sacrifice of our own self-focused outlook.