

Growing Deeper
In This House

Week Four: We Love Our Neighbors
Romans 13:7-10; 1 Timothy 2:1-6a

This past weekend, (along with our sister congregation, Church of All Nations down in U. City) Pathfinder Church held our third Neighborhood Walk Weekend. This is an annual weekend where we ask our community to lean into the “forgotten” Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, by actively asking for his intervention in the geographic spaces around us.

Instead of coming to church last weekend, we (individually or in groups) “prayer walked” around the streets and neighborhoods near us. It’s kind of a “foolish” action, as the world judges. We didn’t do service projects, or use our unique gifts, or fix things—we just submitted people and places to the Holy Spirit’s power. It’s one of the ways we model our reliance on God and our hearts for our neighbors.

Now, you may be wondering what your Growing Deeper assignment will be this week. Quite simply, it’s to keep it up! In Doug Mauss’ message on Sustainable Rhythms, (<https://youtu.be/vEfAMUwVEg0>), he spoke of the importance of putting helpful behaviors into practice in a sustainable way. So, this week, we want to encourage you to spend your FIFTEEN by walking (where allowed) and praying what you see, wherever your week leads you.

For more information or to view the special devotional message for the week, go to Pathfinderstl.org/walks

Week Five: *We Invite Others In*
2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. In this house, we are ambassadors. However, before we are called to be ambassadors, Paul wants us to understand what we are ambassadors for. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Paul repeats “reconciled” and “reconciliation” throughout the six verses. Look up reconcile in a dictionary. Which meaning best fits the passage? What makes it the best fit?
2. Read Romans 5:10. How did God bring the world back into relationship with himself?
3. According to Romans 5:10, are we required to do any work to be reconciled to God?
4. Look closely at verse 20. Is the invitation to be an ambassador a condition of reconciliation or a result of our being reconciled? What’s the difference?
5. How does it make you feel to know that our reconciliation to God is purely a gift?
6. As you end your FIFTEEN, reflect on God’s great love for you. You are a new creation; your old self is gone (v.17). Your sins are not counted against you (v.19). You have become the righteousness of God (v.21). Then end in prayer by thanking God for his work of reconciliation for you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Think about an invitation that you have received: birthday party, retirement, wedding, sales event, business meeting. Regardless of what the invitation was for, it meant that you were being included. How does it feel to be included?
8. Now imagine someone walking out of the bustling cafeteria line into the crowded seating area at a place where he knows few people...if any. It’s busy. It’s loud. The tables seem full. He balances his full tray and tries to navigate away from the cashier at the same time. He pauses and scans the room to find a place to settle and to eat. Then a voice at his elbow says, “Sit here. Join us.” Now put yourself in that scenario. Are you the one who reaches out or the one who is invited?
9. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. Since God has done the work of reconciling us to himself, what work did God give to his people?
10. Reread verse 20. What job title does Paul use for us, God’s people?
11. What do you picture when you hear ambassador?

12. Ambassadors are official representatives who carry a specific message on behalf of someone else. The root of the word ambassador is from the Latin for servant. How does the idea of a servant change your picture of an ambassador?
13. Hidden in verse 20 is a powerful word: therefore. Therefore means “for that reason.” That reason is usually listed in the sentence(s) or paragraph(s) before the therefore. What is the reason for our job as ambassadors?
14. God has a powerful message for us to share with the world! Who needs to hear this message? Jot down a list of people in your life that need to hear this message.
15. Not all hearts are ready at the same time for the invitation that we bear, so pray that hearts can be made ready. Ask God for thoughtful boldness as we pray for who to invite and when to invite. As you end your FIFTEEN, ask that hearts will be softened to hear the love behind the invitation.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

16. Look back to your answer for question 11 yesterday. What does an ambassador look like to you?
17. You may picture an ambassador as someone who looks official, who appears dignified, who has life figured out, who carries herself well, or who is well-spoken. However, God’s only descriptor for an ambassador is: Christ’s (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). Anyone who belongs to Christ is his ambassador. There are no other qualifiers. God does not call us to be perfect, put together, or even praiseworthy. He calls us his own and that is enough. How does that change your view of being an ambassador?
18. Read 2 Corinthians 5:20 again. Paul says that God is making an appeal—an urgent request, an entreaty—through us. How do others see God through you?
19. Read Romans 12:11-21. Paul writes of what love can look like. What challenges your view of loving others? What do you feel God is encouraging you to continue?
20. As you close your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you see yourself as his ambassador—one who has an important message to share. Thank him for using you to share his love with others. Pray for opportunities to practice sharing his love in new ways—even if they are challenging to you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

21. Ambassadors to foreign countries do not set their own agendas but carry out the agenda of their government’s leader. As Christ’s ambassador, God has given us a message: tell others about God’s kingdom and his love for them! Have you had an opportunity to share God’s story with someone? How do you feel about your part in that experience?

22. Read Psalm 139. Sometimes thinking about sharing the story of God is overwhelming. There are a lot of details covered in 66 books of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation! What does Psalm 139 say about the personal nature of his relationship with us?
23. Do you recall a time when God did something that was just for you? What made it feel personal?
24. As you consider inviting someone to an event or worship service, it is helpful to have an elevator speech—a few sentences that capture what God has done for you. Most people have a short attention span when it comes to listening to a story...unless they are your closest friends and family who love to hear all the details. An elevator speech captures the heart of what you are trying to say in 20-60 seconds, or the length of an elevator ride. What are the important parts of your story that you could include in your elevator speech?
25. Looking back to Day One, we were reminded that God's reconciliation to us is a gift of grace entirely on his part; in other words, he offers us unconditional acceptance. Consider God's unconditional acceptance of you. Is there a story that you can share about how you know that God loves you personally and in a unique way?
26. Often God uses messages, Bible study, or devotions to speak to a true-to-life situation in your life. Write about a particular message and the impact it had on you.
27. As you end your FIFTEEN, read over your stories you've noted today. Are they short and to the point? If not, set them aside and come back to it later. Writing is a process; storytelling is a process; figuring out how to share your story is a process. And you have a good start. Then end in prayer by asking God to give you an opportunity to practice sharing his story about his love for you or the power of his Word in your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

28. Our stories can be powerful tools as we connect with others. Reread your stories from yesterday. Do they still resonate with you or does everything flow? Ask God to show you how to hone the stories more and settle your mind into time with him.
29. Think about the connections with people who God has used to draw you closer to him. Where did you meet them? How has God used them to deepen your faith journey? Consider writing a brief note to share with them about how God has used them in your life. (If you are not connected to people yet, ask God to open doors to connect you to others.)
30. God also wants to connect with his people personally. Communion is one of the tangible ways that God connects with his people by offering the forgiveness of sins through the eating and drinking of his body and blood.
31. Read Matthew 26:26-29 and Luke 22:19-20. What does Jesus say about the Lord's Supper?

32. How has God connected with you during communion? (For more in-depth teaching on communion, watch Dion Garrett's sermon on communion (40 min). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUefR2rcXh8>)

33. Baptism is another way that God physically connects people to himself through water and his Word. How has God used your baptism to connect you to himself? If you have not been baptized or have questions about what baptism is, watch Dion Garrett's message about baptism (40 min) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yQF5t0BY1g> or go to [Pathfinderstl.org/baptism](https://www.pathfinderstl.org/baptism) for more information.

34. All of these stories are how God is leading you to know more of who he is and how much he loves you. As an ambassador for Christ, equipped with unique personal stories to share about God's love for you, end your FIFTEEN asking God for an opportunity to share one of your stories. Pray for boldness to invite a friend, neighbor, coworker to worship or an event at Pathfinder. Ask God to use YOU as an inspiring connection for someone.

Week Three: *We Are Pathfinders*

John 10:1-15

Spending FIFTEEN – Day One

1. In terms of getting through life, do you think there is one true path for everyone or an individual path for each person?
2. Thinking about how you answered the first question, read Psalm 16. How do you think the author of this psalm (David from the Bible) would answer that previous question?
3. Read verse 11 about the “path of life.” God is making a promise in this verse. Is God promising that he’ll put you on this path in the future, or that he has already put you on the path of life? (Go to biblegateway.com and look at other translations to help you wrestle with this question.)
4. Why does the distinction between present and future matter for someone who is trying to trust in this psalm?
5. Where on the path is a person who isn’t actively following God in their own life?
6. Does it feel to you like you are on the path of life? Why or why not?
7. We’re going to spend this week evaluating our own paths in order to have better footing for the path God wants us to find. As you finish your FIFTEEN, pray to God and ask him to set your feet firmly on the path he has for you!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. If your life story was a series of chapters, which chapter would be your favorite? Which one your least favorite?
9. Read Psalm 16:1-2. Where does all of our good come from?
10. It’s important to recognize the chapters in our life during which God’s goodness came through. Take a few minutes and write down between 5 and 10 of the most pivotal “turning points” in your life. It might be having met somebody, having experienced a success or a failure, or having gone through a loss.
11. Now look at these turning points and rate them on a scale of 10 to *negative* 10 based on how positive or negative each event was.
12. Now look at these events as a whole. What might be a theme of the life—the path—that you’ve been living?

13. Look more closely at the negative turning points. What is something good that has come out of even the worst moments in your life?

14. End your FIFTEEN by giving thanks to God that he is faithful to bring blessing in spite of—or even *through*—the negative things that happen to us on our journey.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. If you had to go on a show like *The Amazing Race*, who would you pick to be your travel buddy, and why?

16. Now read Psalm 16:3-4. What kind of people is David describing in this section?

17. What is the effect of these people on David's journey?

18. You have an effect on others' journeys. Think about the various roles you play among the people in your life. Write down the five most important roles that you fill (spouse, friend, boss, co-worker, parent, etc.).

19. Now think: what would be your ambitions or goals for each of these five primary roles?

20. What is a next step you could take in each of these roles that would be a step towards being “a noble one” who delights in others' journeys?

21. Finish your FIFTEEN by giving thanks to God that he doesn't ask us to journey alone. Pray for his help in using you to encourage the journeys of others!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. The people we surround ourselves with *make a huge difference* in the way we walk and discover our paths. Who is someone who has blessed or encouraged you in your journey? Who is someone who has made your path more difficult?

23. Read Psalm 16:5-6. Who is the one relationship that norms all of our other relationships?

24. The psalmist talks about “boundary lines” that God gives us. Let's evaluate the boundary lines in our most important relationships. First, who are the 5-10 people you spend the most time with in a given week? Write them down. These are your “social atom.”

25. Now evaluate these relationships: Which relationships in your social atom are making you a better person? Which relationships are negatively affecting the person you want to become?

26. Who are the people you would like to spend more time with, because they help you to become better or because you help them to become better? Who are the people that you should start to spend less time with because you're not helping them and they're not helping you?

27. Who in your life do you want to start changing your relationship with so that you can be an encouragement to them?

28. Conclude your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you discernment to recognize unhealthy boundaries in your social atom and to give you his wisdom to start changing your relationships for the better.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Have you ever known an old person who seemed to have serenity and peace in their last days? What do you think it is that helps someone be like that instead of just a cranky old coot?

30. Read Psalm 16:7-10. Who or what is driving the direction of the psalmist's life?

31. For us to chart a good path for our life, we need to know what goal we're heading towards. Relationally, ask yourself: "When I am 75, I want my spouse (children, friends, co-workers) to describe me as _____."

32. Professionally, "When I am 75, I would like to have accomplished these things in my career..."

33. Financially and physically, "When I am 75, I would like to have achieved _____ financial goals and feel _____ about my body..."

34. For each of those categories (Relational, Professional, Financial, Physical), choose and write down one simple step that you can start taking today.

35. For your final FIFTEEN this week, reread all of Psalm 16, asking God to lead you on his path of life and to help you be intentional about every step of the journey.