

**Growing Deeper**  
*Great Expectations*

**Week One: *The Perfect Gift: Taking God out of the Box***  
*Matthew 1:1-17; John 1:1-5, 9-14*

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. How many generations will be part of your Christmas celebrations?
2. How far back do you know your ancestry? What stories are connected to your lineage?
3. Read Matthew 1:1-17. Which names do you recognize? What do you know about them?
4. Matthew is a bridge book linking the Old Testament, with its fervent anticipation of the Messiah, to the Messiah's arrival in the New Testament. Matthew's genealogy proves Jesus was descended from King David and therefore qualified to be the Messiah. What other things do you learn about Jesus from Matthew's genealogy?
5. This genealogy already takes us outside our expectations of God. Among Jesus' ancestors were prostitutes, non-Jews, and noted sinners. How does this change your understanding of God?
6. Matthew's genealogy also reveals God's promise-keeping. When sin came into the world, God promised a rescuer. Jesus came as promised and was much more than expected. In what part of your life do you need God's rescue?
7. End your FIFTEEN talking to God and then listening to him. Ask him to show you places where you have limited expectations of his rescue. Ask him to expand your understanding of his love and power.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

8. Is a nativity part of your Christmas traditions? In what way?
9. Read John 1:1-5, 9-14. How often do you think of this passage when you think of Christmas?
10. Read the passage again. This time replace "the Word" with the name Jesus. What startling things does this passage say about Jesus?
11. Compare the John passage with the way Matthew starts his gospel. What conclusions do you draw?

12. John's gospel begins with a poetic prologue that traces Jesus' origins to eternity past. John 1:10 says the world did not recognize him as their life- and light-giving God. Why do you think this happened? Does it happen today? Why?
13. End your FIFTEEN reading verses 1-5 aloud slowly. Read it over and over in worship and thanksgiving. Let Jesus expand your understanding of who he is and what he is capable of.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

14. Do you make out a Christmas list or do you like to be surprised on Christmas morning? Why do you think that is?
15. How do you react when you receive a gift that is totally unexpected?
16. Read John 1:14. Try to put this verse into your own words.
17. What about these statements is unexpected? Why?
18. God became human and came to live among humans. How did this make people of Jesus' day uncomfortable? How does this make people uncomfortable today?
19. John was an eyewitness of God coming to "dwell" among people. John ate, slept, walked, and talked with Jesus, who was God. End your FIFTEEN contemplating what it would be like to have God physically present all through your day. Pray through your response.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

20. What would you consider a perfect gift to receive?
21. What would you consider a perfect gift to give?
22. Read Matthew 1:1-17 and John 1:1-5, 9-14 again. What does it mean when we say Jesus is fully God and fully human?
23. While Matthew gives us the lineage of Jesus' humanness, John shows us his divine lineage. Taken together, God has done something unthinkable. What did Jesus do that only a human could do? What did Jesus do that only God could do?

24. How does Jesus' full divinity and full humanity make him the perfect gift?

25. Spend the rest of your time in thanksgiving. Thank Jesus for the ways his humanness helps you. Thank him for the ways his divinity helps you.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

26. What is your favorite Christmas carol? Does it focus more on the divinity of Jesus or the humanity of Jesus?

27. God's amazing revelation of himself as a Three in One God (the Trinity) is beyond our understanding. What illustrations have you heard to attempt to explain the Trinity?

28. Read John 1:1-5, 9-14. How does John write about the Trinity?

29. The statement that Jesus was "with" God is an affirmation of his separate personality. There is a diversity within the Godhead. "The Word was God" means everything that can be said about the God the Father can be said about God the Son. In Jesus, God is known. What is your reaction to an unsearchable being who goes to such lengths to be known?

30. Read John 17:20-21. Jesus desires each precious follower to be part of the mysterious, intensely loving relationship of the Trinity. What is your reaction to this?

31. To have a deep, vibrant relationship with the Triune God can be both scary and exhilarating. How does this invitation from Jesus transform your Christmas expectations?

32. End your FIFTEEN letting go of your fear. Ask God to take you deeper into himself.