

**Growing Deeper**  
*2020 You*

**Week One: *Empathy: seeing the world through the eyes of others***  
*Romans 12:9-10, 13, 15-16*

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. There's a buzzword in our culture today—the concept of “empathy.” Based on your own experience, how would you define or summarize “empathy”?
2. Watch this short, 3-minute reflection on empathy by Dr. Brené Brown.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw> How does Dr. Brown define empathy? How is it different from sympathy?
3. Now read Romans 12:9-16. Which of these verses would you say are describing “empathy”?
4. Now look more specifically at verse 15. What are some real-life examples of doing the things described in this verse?
5. Do those things feel foreign or natural to you? Why do you feel that way?
6. Who is in your life right now that is rejoicing or grieving? How could you choose to enter into that process with them?
7. End your FIFTEEN by praying and ask God to bring someone to your mind and heart that you can reach out to— simply to celebrate with them or to mourn with them.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

8. Imagine this scenario: you're volunteering at a local high school and one of the students confides in you that he wants to drop out. What kind of emotional response would you give? Now imagine that you have a teenager and your own kid comes up to you and says he wants to drop out. How is your response different between the two scenarios?
9. What is the key difference in your relationships with these kids that changes your reaction?
10. Read Matthew 7:1-6. What natural human response is Jesus warning us against?
11. Think about the relationships you have that make you feel the safest and most included. Now think about the current relationships in your life that you feel the least comfortable in. On a scale of 1-5, how much judgment do you feel from people in the former group? The latter?

12. In this chapter, what are the characteristics of the kind of community Jesus wants us to be?
13. How would it feel to receive the benefits of not being judged by others? How hard would it be for you to offer that same lack of judgment to others?
14. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to remove the burden of “judgment” from you. Ask him to open your heart to receive people just the way they are, to share in their hurts and fears, and to respond with only connection and your caring presence in the midst of their hurting.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

15. If you were to ask your parents what’s wrong with our country today, what answers do you think they would give?
16. Now read James 1:19-22. Using his filter, what do you think James would say tends to be the main problem with human societies?
17. Verse 19 has three verbs: *listen*, *speak*, and *become angry*. Which one(s) should we be quick to do? Which one(s) should we be slow to do?
18. What value does *listening* provide to relationships?
19. If you think you already understand someone’s problem or situation, how much time do you now need to spend listening?
20. Give yourself a dare. See if you can go a whole day without *telling* anybody anything. Only listen and ask *questions*. You might be surprised at how that changes your dynamics for the better.
21. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying for God to help you have his ears and his heart for the people in your life.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

22. If you’re traveling in a foreign country and accidentally break a local, cultural law, where would you rather face trial—in that country or in your home country? Why? What is the presupposition about your own national judge?
22. Theoretically, all judges would be about objective justice. But in practice, we would probably more trust the judge who shares our own cultural values. When you think about God’s judgment, does that feel like a foreign, hostile trial, or a local, friendly trial?

23. Read Hebrews 4:12-16. What astounding statement about the Divine Creator, Judge of the Universe does this author make?
24. According to verse 15, what was the point of God becoming Jesus, a human being who lived a life on Earth?
25. In light of Jesus' empathy, how does this change the way we can expect God's judgment of us to go? (See verse 16.)
26. God has seen deep into your soul, exposing your innermost thoughts and desires, and he responds with mercy. How can that change your own perspective on your own feelings and failings?
27. As you finish your FIFTEEN, pray for God to help you respond to his own empathetic mercy with grace and forgiveness for yourself.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

23. Is there anyone in your life that you think is beyond your compassion or empathy? What have they done to make you feel that way about them?
24. Read 2 Kings 5:1-6. What horrible thing had Naaman done to the Israelite maiden?
25. What was her response toward him when he became sick with leprosy?
26. What role do you think his vulnerability and pain had in allowing her to be able to express empathy for a man who had wronged her?
27. What would it take for you to be able to feel empathy for someone who had hurt you?
28. Who could you make a heroic choice to show empathy to right now in your life?
29. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, pray that God will give you his heartbroken empathy even for someone who seems so unsympathetic to you.