

Week Three: *Fighting for Connection (instead of just fighting)*
Matthew 5:21-26

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. If you had to rate your personal connection with God on a scale of 1-10, where would you rate it? Why did you pick that particular number?
2. When it comes to your relationship with God, who invests more in it—God or you?
3. Read Romans 5:8. What first step did God have to take in order to have relationship with us? What does that show about his willingness to fight for connection with us?
4. In what ways are you able to reciprocate, to fight for your relationship with God? In other words, what actions do you take to keep your relationship with God strong?
5. What effect does it have on God's love and affection for you, if you ever stop putting effort into your time with Him?
6. Read 2 Timothy 2:13. What promise does God make about his approach to connecting with us, even if we don't reach out to Him?
7. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, pray and thank God for His faithfulness! Give Him glory because He gave His Son in order to connect with us, and because He will never cease fighting for His relationship with us.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. What is one thing that would be a deal-breaker if a friend ever did it to you? Why would this action be more unforgivable than other things?
9. Is there something you regret doing to a friend or loved one? How did the relationship change after you did this thing?
10. When it comes to rules for relationships, Jesus summarized the whole 10 Commandments into two laws. Read Matthew 22:34-40. What were Jesus' big two?
11. We know we've all fallen short of these commandments in some way. But let's get specific. Look up the 5th commandment: Exodus 20:13. Have you ever broken this law?

12. For most of us, this probably seems like a no-brainer. But let's see how Jesus applied this commandment: Read Matthew 5:21-22. Based on Jesus' interpretation, did your answer to the first question change? What is an instance when you broke the 5th commandment?
13. Unforgiven anger kills a relationship in much the same way that murder kills a person. Are there any relationships that you have killed because you never resolved anger with someone?
14. As you finish your FIFTEEN, lift up any relationships like that in prayer. Ask God to forgive you for your anger. Ask Him also to fill you with hope for your connection with that person, so that you could try to reach out again and love him or her the way Christ does.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. It is hard to fight for connection. We all probably have relationships that have fallen apart. Who are some people with whom you used to be close but have now drifted apart or you no longer speak? (As an example, think of Angela's relationship with her sister from The Office: [youtube.com/watch?v=RHwpFrsWJh8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHwpFrsWJh8))
16. Thinking back on those lapsed relationships, what did you do, if anything, to fight for them?
17. Look again at the passage from yesterday: Matthew 5:23-26. What instructions did Jesus give beyond simply not being angry with our neighbors?
18. This might seem like an unfair expectation. If we acted the way Jesus instructs, how might others take advantage of us?
19. It's helpful to read how Martin Luther explained this passage: "under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it." In what specific ways does this expand on what Jesus said?
20. What are examples of ways you followed (or didn't follow) Luther's advice when a relationship started to go south?
21. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer, asking forgiveness for any times when you didn't fight for a relationship. Also thank God for the healthy relationships you do have. Ask for His help to guide and strengthen you as you try to love people in spite of how hard that might be to do.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. Are there any people in your life with whom you're not at peace right now?

23. Read Romans 12:18. What is Paul's command regarding peace in our relationships? How hard is this command for you in general?
24. Picture people you know who tend to be at peace with everyone. What are some of their traits or attitudes that help them do this?
25. Luckily for us, Paul did give us some practical tips for how to be people of peace. Read Colossians 3:12-17. What different advice does Paul give here?
26. Which of Paul's suggestions come easily to you? Which suggestion would you need to work on?
27. Think of a person from the first question. Based on this passage, what is one thing you could do differently in that relationship?
28. As you finish your FIFTEEN, ask God to give you courage. Pray that He fills you with His Spirit of peace, and uses you to bring peace to others.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. Sometimes it's hard to admit we need help, but Jesus talks about what to do when we've reached our limit in a relationship: Matthew 18:15-20. Read this passage.
30. Would you describe this as a negative process or a positive process? Why?
31. For what outcome would Jesus (and the person leading this process) desire and hope?
32. Verse 17 talks about the consequence of a failed reconciliation. Do you think this is an appropriate outcome or an unfair one? Why?
33. The negative consequence seems pretty harsh - treat them like a pagan or tax collector. On the other hand, how are we supposed to treat people outside the church? (See Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:15 for help with this question.)
34. Is there anyone in your life whom you've given up on, without going through this process for reconciliation? What can you do to reinvest in that relationship and find a way to give them every chance to be restored?

35. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer for this person who is currently in a broken relationship with you. Ask God for help through a wise and godly person whom you can ask to help you attempt to rebuild your connection with this person. Commit to following through within one week.