

**Week Three: *You Are Not Your Past***

***Psalm 103:1-3, 7-12***

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. What regrets do you have about your past? (If you are completing this study with a group, you can pass if you do not feel comfortable answering.)
2. Do you believe you are defined by your past, or is it just water under the bridge, long forgotten? Explain.
3. How do you feel you are defined or at least influenced by your family of origin?
4. Was your early childhood for the most part a pleasant one? Was it privileged or a struggle? In your opinion, is past hardship or past privilege more detrimental to a person's future?
5. Read Paul's "resume" in Philippians 3:4-9. How do you think Paul benefited from his past? In what way might it have been detrimental?
6. How old were you when you gained some objectivity about your childhood, namely, that some of it was good and some of it was not so good? Do you agree that early in life, we just assume our family is the norm?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for all your experiences, good, bad and ugly, that God did not cause, but used to make you who you have become.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

8. Read Psalm 103:1-3, 7-12. What is the emphasis of the first three verses?
9. Do you think people tend to take their blessings for granted? Do you consider yourself a "cup half full" or a "cup half empty" kind of person? Would other people agree or see you in a different light?
10. What do you think Americans take for granted that amaze other people when they first visit the States?
11. What do you think most Christians take for granted that amaze people new to the faith?
12. Why is an attitude of gratitude so important in life? What's the best way to teach that to young children?

13. Are you worse off or better off than you expected to be at this point in life? How has your present reality affected your relationship with the Lord?
  
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and appreciate the blessings you often take for granted.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

15. Read Psalm 103:7-12. What verse in that section caught your greatest attention? Why?
  
16. In Psalm 103:7, David praises God for making Himself known in the past. How does He continue to make Himself known in your life?
  
17. Do you believe God sometimes miraculously prompts you with a suggestion or direction He wants you to pursue in life?
  
18. Do you believe He sometimes uses others or circumstances to guide your path? Can you think of any examples?
  
19. Look again at Psalm 103:8. Does that verse describe you also? Should it? Why should we be compassionate towards those who have wronged us, according to the Lord's Prayer? (See Matthew 6:9-13)
  
20. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. What's the difference between punishment and discipline? According to Psalm 103:9-10, does the justice or mercy of God dominate His attitude towards sinners?
  
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more like God, showing more compassion and grace to those who wrong you.... even if they don't seek your forgiveness.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

22. What three examples does David use in Psalm 103:11-13 to describe God's forgiving nature? Which is the most compelling to you?
  
23. Are you able to forgive and forget when others wrong you? Explain.
  
24. Are you able to forgive and forget your own sins and missteps as easily as you forgive others?

25. Why do you think most people allow their past mistakes to continue to affect their self-perception and self-worth many years later?
26. Have you discovered any practical ways to overcome a troubled past that might be helpful to others?
27. Do you believe in karma... that what goes around comes around? Read Job 4:8 and Galatians 6:7-8 and comment.
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for the Lord to renew your spirit and restore your sense of value based on His promise to remove your sins.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

29. Read Luke 7:40-50. What is the main point of the story Jesus told Simon?
30. Look at Luke 7:47. What did Jesus say about those who have been forgiven little? What does that mean? Does it mean good people are unable to love?
31. Read Matthew 21:28-31. Why did Jesus praise tax collectors and prostitutes?
32. Is it possible for Christians to take God's grace for granted?
33. Have you ever heard the term "cheap grace?" What do you think it means?
34. How can you help others understand that, just like yourself, they do not have to be defined by their past?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more gracious and accepting of people haunted by their past and to equip you to help them understand that God has promised not to define His people by their pasts.