

Growing Deeper
Guaranteed

Week One: *I Love You No Matter What*
Romans 8:31-39

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Who has been your biggest advocate in life? What qualities are found in effective advocates?
2. Have you ever found yourself defending someone that others thought was a waste of time? How did that turn out? Why was it important for your sake? For theirs?
3. Read Lamentations 3:22-23. What does it tell you about God?
4. Do you think it's more important for Christian churches to teach about second chances (because everyone needs one) or do you think they should focus more on truth and condemn sin more firmly? Explain your answer.
5. Do you think if churches were more faithful in condemning the evils of society and did a better job of holding up a moral standard, there would be less sin in society today?
6. Who needs to be reminded of God's expectations? Who needs to be reminded of God's grace and mercy?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for the courage to step up and step into the life of someone who has given up hope for a better future.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read Romans 8:31-39. To what kind of people is Paul writing these words? Who especially needs to hear them today?
9. Are you the kind of person who kicks yourself for messing up, or do you shrug it off and keep moving?
10. What does Romans 8:31-39 say about the importance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the life of the living and not just the dying Christian?
11. What does it mean to you when it says in verse 34 that Jesus is at the right of the Father making intercession for you?
12. Which phrase do you think most applies in life: "Life is just a bowl of cherries" or "Life is hard and then you die"?

Choose one. Explain your choice.

13. What lessons about the nature and values of God do we learn through Jesus' interactions with people in His life? Do you think His values are still evident in most Christian people today? Why or why not?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be able to see past the details when reading the Bible and to recognize what lesson God is trying to help you understand about living your life as His child.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Read Romans 8:36-37. What point is being made by the analogy of sheep being led to slaughter?
16. Who is doing the slaughtering?
17. Look again at Romans 8:37. What phrase is used to describe Christians in this verse? Do you agree with that assessment? Why or why not?
18. In that same verse, what phrase is used to describe Jesus? How might seeing Jesus that way help you take hold of the promise that you are indeed *more than a conqueror*?
19. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that God would help you take hold of the promise that you are more than a conqueror.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Read Romans 8:38-39. In your own words, what is Paul trying to say?
21. What do you believe is the biggest threat to faith: God's apparent lack of concern for His own, materialism, unanswered prayer, political correctness, the secularization of America, or something else?
22. If the person or thing most precious to you in life were destroyed, how would your faith survive? What's the greatest test of faith you've had to face so far in life?
23. Do you love God as much as He loves you? What's the difference?
24. Explain the difference between God's unconditional love of sinners and allowing people to suffer the consequence of

their sin.

25. There's a saying that goes, "When everyone else walks out, God walks in." What does that phrase mean to you? According to Romans 8:38-39, what would it take for God to give up on you?
26. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for America and the people of the world to accept God's love as revealed in Jesus our Savior.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

27. Look again at Romans 8:38. Do you believe in a real devil?
28. Read Ephesians 6:10-12. Who is the real enemy of Christians?
29. Why do you think God gets all the blame for evil in the world?
30. Why doesn't God rid the world of the devil and evil? Read the parable of the weeds in the wheat found in Matthew 13:24-30 for insight.
31. Read Romans 8:28. God doesn't cause all things but God causes all things to work to the good of those who are called. How can God use evil for our good?
32. Have you ever encountered someone who practiced witchcraft or satanic worship? Do you think that is becoming more common or less likely? Explain. How should Christians handle those situations?
33. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for enemies of the faith and give thanks that Jesus has made us more than conquerors, even in the face of evil.

Week Two: *I Will Not Waste Your Struggles*
2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-11. What do you consider the key verse in this section?
2. Paul talks about light shining out of darkness and of treasure that is hidden in jars of clay. What's he trying to say about the Christian life by using metaphors of contrast?
3. Singing competitions on TV have been popular for a long time. Have you ever been surprised to hear a person who sounds completely different than they appear? How is that similar to Paul's comments here?
4. Which phrase do you believe is mostly true: "You can't judge a book by its cover" or "You never get a second chance to make a first impression"? Explain your answer.
5. What's the advantage of people having low expectations of you? What's the disadvantage?
6. How does having Christ in you (Christian faith) alter your reality?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that God might increase in your life and the weakness of your sinful human nature would decrease.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. Can you think of three possible reasons why God allows Christians to suffer in this life?
9. The famous hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* says, "Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The kingdom's ours forever!" What loss would test your faith to its limits?
10. According to 2 Corinthians 4:10, as we suffer personal loss in this life, what happens to our faith? Has that been true for you?
11. An old German proverb says, "The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg." What do you think that means? What kind of water does that? How is life like that?
12. The Bible describes the enemies of a Christian as the devil, the world, and our own sinful condition. Which do you

struggle against most often?

13. How does the struggle of a Christian provide opportunity for faith to be seen by others?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more transparent about your struggles so those who observe your life might see the power of Christ working in you.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Three

15. Read 2 Corinthians 4:15. How is the example of Paul and the other faithful to the benefit of the Corinthians?
(Consider the immediate context i.e. being hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, etc.)
16. Do you think that principle still applies today?
17. Read James 2:15-17. Do you agree with the ancient statement attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words!" What do you think he meant?
18. Do you believe outsiders first hear (or read) of the Christian faith and then observe our behavior, or first observe our behavior and then check out the things we believe? Do actions speak louder than words?
19. According to 2 Corinthians 4:15, what is the result when nonbelievers observe the faithfulness of Christians facing real struggles?
20. Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-13. What is Paul saying in those verses?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more intentional about your witness of actions in public to help others understand the promises we have in Christ.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Four

22. Continue reading 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. How does Paul describe our outward condition? What does he mean by that?
23. How are we blessed by our momentary troubles? (v. 17)
24. When Paul says we should not fix our eyes on what is seen, what does he mean?

25. People often advise us to remember the phrase, “This too will pass.” Do you think that kind of thinking is helpful? Why or why not?
26. When is a home in need of rehab? Should things be updated just because they are dated? What was the must-have item last year? Two years ago? What does that teach us about the temporary nature of life and this world’s values?
27. What does Paul mean when he says we should fix our eyes on things that are unseen? Why is that sometimes difficult for us to do?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more aware of the difference between temporary wants and lasting values.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Five

29. Read Philippians 1:21-26. Paul was in prison awaiting his sentence for not honoring Roman authority. Did he have a personal preference about the verdict?
30. Are you at a crossroad in your life? Do you have a personal preference about your future? Are you okay no matter how it turns out?
31. Would you prefer to know your future, or be surprised? Why?
32. If you feel safe to share, what momentary troubles are you facing just now?
33. What has the effect of that upset been on your life? Has anything good come out of it?
34. What gives you ultimate confidence that in the end, everything will work out for the best? Or maybe you lack that confidence? Why or why not?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater faith to believe that no matter what life throws your way, trusting in the Lord’s promises will guide your path.

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.