

Growing Deeper
Tapping In

Week One - Does God Have More for Me?
Judges 6:11-16

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Does it seem to you that God is actively working in your life? Why or why not?
2. If you answered yes to question #1, give an example of how you see God at work.
3. Read Judges 6:11-16. What did the angel of the Lord say to Gideon in verse 12?
4. How did Gideon respond?
5. What does Gideon's reply to the angel of the Lord suggest would happen in Gideon's life if God were truly with him?
6. What about your life — how do you think your life is different because God is with you? Do you feel the same as Gideon?
7. If having a perfect success is not guaranteed by having a relationship with God, what else does he offer us? Read Isaiah 26:3 for insight.
8. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you see him at work in your life, especially at those times when it is not obvious to you.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

9. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best, how would you rate your relationship with God? Are you happy with where you are?
10. Look at Judges 6:11-16. What did the angel of the Lord call Gideon in verse 12?
11. What does a mighty warrior look like in your mind?
12. What was Gideon doing when the angel of the Lord found him? (See vs. 11.)

13. Do you think that God saw something in Gideon that no one else, especially Gideon, saw? Or was God speaking into Gideon's life to make him become something he was not? Explain your answer.
14. In question #9, we began by asking how you felt about your relationship with God. After doing today's lesson, how do you think God would answer that question about you?
15. If you think God has something more to say to you, close your FIFTEEN by asking God to make you open to what he has to say to you, so that you are ready and able to tap into him when he speaks.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

16. Yesterday we pondered whether God saw a great warrior in Gideon or if he was speaking a new identity into him. What about you? Do you feel as though you were born to do something specific or are you still trying to figure out what that might be?
17. Look again at Judges 6:11-16. What command did the angel of the Lord give Gideon in verse 14?
18. What was the angel's rationale for why Gideon would be successful?
19. If you were trying to do something new and courageous, might the understanding that God had chosen you make a difference?
20. How does this make you feel about improving your ability to hear God speak to you?
21. Read Psalm 119:129-131. These words were written by David, one of the greatest warriors ever. What did David want from God?
22. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer using David's words in Psalm 119 as your own. Ask God to light your way with his words.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

23. Look again at Judges 6:11-16. What was Gideon's argument in verse 15?
24. Gideon only saw himself in one way, the lowest of the low. In what way have you allowed your position or circumstances to define you?

25. Read Ephesians 2:10. How does this verse describe us?

26. A better translation for the “handiwork” word is Masterpiece; we are God’s ultimate creation. Maybe you are not an artist, but if you were to create a masterpiece, something you treasured, how would you treat it?

27. God feels the same about you. Not only does he want the best for you, he wants you to become your best. Look again at Ephesians 2:10. Why has God created you?

28. How does knowing that God has created you, his Masterpiece, for a specific purpose affect your willingness to believe and listen to what he has to say to you?

29. As you finish your FIFTEEN, ask God to help you trust in his purpose for your life.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

30. In case you’re wondering how things turned out for Gideon, read Hebrews 11:32-34 for a description of how he is remembered, historically. Does this sound like the same guy threshing wheat in the winepress?

31. If you have the time to read Gideon’s story in Judges 6-8, it is well worth it. Note some of the important lessons of Gideon’s life here.

32. What lesson about listening to God do you take from Gideon’s life?

33. Too often in our relationship with God, we are content with the obvious things God provides for us, so we don't think to ask for more. But God is speaking words of incredible value over us, words we don’t realize we badly need to hear. What words do you need to hear from God?

34. Close your FIFTEEN by asking God to say what you need to hear. Do you need to know you are a mighty warrior? Tell him so. Do you need to know you are his Masterpiece? Tell him what you need, then take the time to listen for his reply.

Week Two - *How Can I "Tap in" to God?*

2 Samuel 6:12-23

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. When was the last time you felt someone really listened to you? When was the last time you really listened to someone else? How could you tell? How did it feel?
2. When was the last time you felt God listened to you? How could you tell?
3. Read 2 Samuel 6:12-23. Why is David so joyful?
4. Read Exodus 25:17-22. The Ark represented God's physical presence. God was among people. Another word for it is Immanuel, a name given to Jesus. What does this tell you about God?
5. God wants to be intimate with his people. He wants to be heard. What distracts you from experiencing God's intimate presence?
6. Listening requires "other awareness," or in this case, awareness of God. As you finish your FIFTEEN, ask God to heighten your sense of him both in you and with you. Consider ways to remind yourself of God's real presence. This week, practice being aware of God.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

7. From your experience, how well would you say people today listen to each other? Has this improved over the generations or gotten worse?
8. What problems arise when we don't listen to one another? What problems could arise when we don't listen to God?
9. Read Psalm 19:7-11. How are the words of God described?
10. How could words that are refreshing, trustworthy, illuminating, or dependable make your life "sweeter"?
11. We have the blessing of God's words written down, like a personal letter to each of us. How do you feel when someone does not read your letter, email, or text? What are they missing out on? How is it similar when we do not read God's Word?

12. Finish your FIFTEEN by looking through a Bible. Pick a short book of the Bible such as Philippians, James, or 1 John. Sometime this week, read the book straight through as you would a letter. What stands out to you? Ask God to speak to your current circumstances through his written Word.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

13. Read John 10:1-5. Have you ever tried to recognize someone by his or her voice? What helps you know their voice? What would help you recognize the voice of Jesus?

14. Review Psalm 19:7-11. How would you describe the relationship between the psalmist and the LORD?

15. How would you describe your relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

16. The more we listen to someone, the more we recognize them when they speak. We also know the content of what they've said previously, so we can more confidently identify them. How does this relate to "Tapping In" to God?

17. Recognizing God's voice takes practice, experience, and knowledge of his written Word. Have you ever been frustrated when you "couldn't hear God"? What practical steps could you take to be able to better recognize God when he speaks?

18. St. John Church outlines steps in a life journey with God as 1.1.15.6. Look this up on the website (stjstl.net). How could each step help you recognize God's voice? A good first step to hearing and recognizing God's voice is regular prayer. Finish your FIFTEEN by inviting God to speak. Tell him you are listening. Ask questions. Express your feelings, doubts, and desires. Spend time both talking and listening. Ask God to help you hear his response.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

19. What listening skills have you learned through experience, observation, job training, etc.?

20. One article on active listening (mindtools.com) states, "One way to improve your listening skills is to practice 'active listening.' This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but more importantly, the complete message being communicated." They give 5 key active listening techniques: pay attention; show that you're listening; provide feedback; defer judgment; respond appropriately. Which of these seems easier to you? Which seems harder?

21. How could you apply these techniques, or others you have learned, to listening to God?

22. Real listening is hard work, but the results make it worth it. Read the story of Jesus and the 10 lepers. (Luke 17:11-19) Which active listening techniques do all the lepers display? Which techniques does only one leper display? What blessing does the "tapped in" leper experience?

23. Which active listening technique would take your connection with God to a new level?

24. Spend the remaining FIFTEEN talking and actively listening to God. Attempt to practice all five of the active listening techniques. Be sure to notice the blessings that result.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

25. Have you ever envied someone's close relationship with God? Have you ever wondered why someone else seems to hear God's voice and you don't? What do these feelings drive you to do?

26. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-2 and Numbers 7:89. Why was David so excited about the Ark coming to Jerusalem?

27. Review 2 Samuel 6:12-23. Why was Michal so upset with David? Do you think she was envious?

28. Focus on verses 18-19. How did David's passion for God benefit others?

29. What can we learn about life with God from this story of David?

30. David didn't care if his passion for God was public and exuberant. He craved God's presence. David loved God. David knew God loved and forgave him. David's heart was "tapped in" to his heavenly Father. His response was worship and generosity. What is your response to the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ?

31. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. The good news is God craves your presence too. He wants to be in communication with you. He wants it so much he came to earth to live, die, and rise again in order to make it possible. We can approach God with confidence knowing he will help us hear his voice. End your FIFTEEN thanking God for making a way for us to confidently enjoy his presence and hear his voice.



Week Three - *Did I Hear That Right?*

Judges 16

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Today we're going to look at the story of Samson, a man whose life God began speaking into even before he was born. Read Judges 13:2-14.

2. What did the angel of the Lord say Manoah and his wife's son should be? (v. 4-5)

3. Read Numbers 6:2-21. Summarize a short list of the requirements for a Nazirite vow.

4. In Numbers, we see a Nazirite vow was usually taken by a man or a woman for a short period of time. How long was Manoah's son's vow to last? (v. 7)

5. It is interesting to note that only two other people are listed in the Bible as having taken Nazirite vows from birth: Samuel and John the Baptist. Both accomplished amazing things for God. Read on in Judges 13:15-25. How do you think hearing this news directly from an angel of the Lord would have impacted the seriousness with which Samson's parents heeded God's direction?

6. Describe how you feel such clear and specific directions would have impacted you.

7. After making an entrance into the world like this, including an incredible vow, one would hope Samson would listen carefully to God. But we'll soon see that was not always the case, just as it is for us. Close your FIFTEEN today by thanking God for having a purpose for all of us, in spite of our imperfections.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. We now catch up to Samson when he is a grown man, supposedly carrying out the purpose God has given him to help rescue his people from the Philistines. Now read Judges 14:1-7.
 - a. Whom did Samson want to marry? (v. 2)

 - b. What was his criterion in selecting a wife? (v. 3)

 - c. How was this strange choice used by God? (v. 4)

9. Samson is not off to a great start. He's supposed to be rescuing his people from the Philistines, not fraternizing with them. Continue reading Judges 14:8-9.
 - a. How did Samson kill the lion?

 - b. Where did Samson find the honey he ate?

10. Samson ate honey (made from pollen) found inside a dead animal lying next to a vineyard. The vow is pretty clear, nothing from the grapevine, not even seeds, no unclean food, and no dead bodies. Samson did not follow the rules of his vow. The Bible does not give insight into Samson's motives; do you think he purposely ignored his vow? Could there be other reasons that he did not follow the rules?
11. Verse 4 hints that God was even going to use Samson's bad choices for his purposes. Sometimes we spend a lot of time beating ourselves up for our mistakes. How does it feel to know God can even use your weaknesses for good?
12. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Give thanks to God that he is able to take those times we do not listen to him correctly and turn them into opportunities.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

13. Samson continued to struggle with following God's commands. Read Judges 16:1-3. What was nearly Samson's demise?
14. Samson's carnal desires almost cost him his life, but his heart would be his undoing. Continue reading Judges 16:4-21.
 - a. How did Samson feel about Delilah? (v. 4)
 - b. What did she try to get him to tell her? (v. 6)
 - c. What was she promised in return for the information? (v. 5)
 - d. What did she do to wear him down? (v. 15-16)
 - e. What was his reaction? (v. 17)
15. Delilah did not know his weaknesses, but she knew what his weak spot was: her! She used what was important to him to get what was important to her. Samson gave his heart away to someone he shouldn't. But far more tragic, Samson loved Delilah more than he loved God. By the time Samson finally broke the last part of his Nazirite vow, he had greatly forsaken his relationship with God. Read Matthew 12:30-31; what is the only unforgivable sin? Why is it unforgivable?
16. Does knowing that God will forgive you when you try and fail to follow him perfectly make you more or less courageous to try to hear him speak to you? Explain your answer.
17. At the end of today we see that Samson tragically lost his strength, his eyesight, and the ability to be used by God...or did he? Thankfully God is a God of second chances! Tomorrow we'll read what God still has in store for this not-so-perfect hero. End your FIFTEEN today by asking God to give you the courage to try to hear him, even though you know that you won't be able to do so perfectly.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

18. Read Judges 16:23-31. What was Samson's final act?

- a. What was the ceremony honoring? (v.23-24) Why is this significant?
- b. Whom did Samson call upon once more? (v. 28)
- c. How many died in his final act? (v. 30)
- d. How many years did Samson judge Israel? (v. 31)

19. Even though Samson was weak and repeatedly failed God, God still used him to help accomplish his mission of destroying the Philistines. Although Samson made a complete mess of things, he was still willing to lay down his life for the cause God had given him. What better place to display God's might than in the middle of a ceremony dedicated to one of the Philistines' false gods! Samson called out to God in faith, God honored Samson's request to be used by Him one final time, and in so doing, Samson avenged what he had lost. What flaws or past sins keep you from calling on God?

20. Why is it so easy to allow your sins to keep you from calling on God?

21. Are there other flaws you use to "excuse" yourself from God's work?

22. What do you think God would like you to do instead of making excuses or avoiding him?

23. End your FIFTEEN in prayer, turning over your weaknesses and your very life to God. Reach out to him in faith, knowing that he wants to talk with you more than anything else and that he can use you to accomplish great things.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day FIVE

24. For many of us, the moments we long to hear from God most are the moments we need direction or help with a weighty decision. What do you typically do when you want to hear from God?

25. Does the fear of not hearing God correctly make you hesitant in seeking his counsel? Why or why not?

26. The story of Samson helps us to see that God can use us for his purposes even when we fail. Read Joel 2:18-27. What does God promise he will do? (See v. 25-26.)

27. What is God's promise to his people in verse 27?

28. How does that promise make you feel?

29. Take a few moments and think about the times you have not trusted in his promises enough to seek his counsel. Then close your FIFTEEN in a time of confession. Ask God to help you to be emboldened by his promises in order to seek first God's wisdom for your life.

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Week Four: *Is God's Voice Even a Voice?*
Numbers 22:21-39

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. As you read in the story in Numbers 22, the king of Moab looked to Balaam for a spiritual curse to be delivered upon the Israelites. Why did the king want to curse the people of God?
2. Read 2 Peter 2:15-16. When you read the whole story, one of Balaam's downfalls was greed. Recall a time when you had received a clear answer from God but pursued your own way despite his wishes.
3. When we are in sin, God sends us redirection in different forms. From where have you received redirection in times of trouble or rebellion?
4. How can we be sure that the direction we hear is from God?
5. Describe a time when you have been surprised to hear direction from God coming from an unexpected source.
6. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer that God would open your eyes and heart to see and hear from him today. Be on the look out for truth, even from places that are not implicitly Christian.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Read John 21. Jesus used signs and events throughout his ministry to confirm his role and identity. Recall other times in the Bible when God used such events.
8. Most of us can think of an event or sign where we felt God was speaking to us or helping us to be discerning. Recall an experience when this happened. Were you looking for it or did it come with hindsight?
9. What does Romans 12:2 say about knowing God's will? When looking for a sign, how have you been able to discern that the sign was from God?
10. Some Christians feel that we can hear from God in various ways, like dreams, symbols, counsel from others, a spiritual sensitivity, or a feeling of uneasiness. Which of these, or others, do you feel could be used by the enemy to trip us up?
11. Spend the last part of your FIFTEEN in prayer. If you are seeking clarity in an area of your life, ask God. Also be sure to ask with the proper motives. (James 4:1-10)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

12. The past two days we have taken a deeper look at how God speaks to us through various means. Today we will explore how God uses people to speak to us. Read Acts 18:24-28.

13. Priscilla and Aquila were credited with helping Apollos along in the “truth.” When have you been aided by the godly counsel of someone who was your spiritual elder?

14. Can you recall a time in your life when you were surprised that truth or godly wisdom was coming from a *person* you would not have expected? What made it surprising?

15. Priscilla and Aquila are to be admired for their tact, wisdom, and love of the Gospel. Describe a time when you had to take someone aside and be the voice of truth. How did that person react to the truth coming from you?

16. As you finish your FIFTEEN, ask God for the Holy Spirit to be your guide as you are a bringer of his Kingdom. Pray for any hard conversations that need to take place in your relationships so you will have tact, wisdom, and a love motivated by the Gospel.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

17. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. Dwell on the words, “radiance of God’s glory, and the exact representation of his being.” What thoughts, images, and feelings come to mind when you hear this description of Jesus?

18. We have been exploring the different ways we listen for God. Read the account of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36. What are we reminded to do in verse 35?

19. Jesus said that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). We can get to know him directly through his Word. Think about how these three words (way, truth, and life) are relevant and meaningful for your journey.

20. If you feel God is particularly distant in your life right now, finish your FIFTEEN by praying for the strength of the Holy Spirit to spend a greater amount of your time reading Jesus’ words found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If Jesus is the exact representation of the Father, then he will show you what God cares about and how to listen for him.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

21. For the past four days we have been seeking ways to listen for God in our lives. Record interactions, sightings, or promptings when you may have heard God speaking through you, through others, or through things over the past few days.

22. Read John 10:1-21. Jesus makes a lot of truth claims. Why do the “sheep” follow him? List all the benefits.

23. How can we get to know the will of the Father better?

24. God's nature is to speak to us. He has given us his Son. He has given us his Word. Luther said that prayer is not just speaking, but also listening. What are you doing in your life to make time for these things? (His Son, his Word, and prayer)

25. Use the rest of your FIFTEEN to take time to purposely find space for God through prayer. Ask him to help lead you to a place where it is not hard to see and hear from him. Remember that, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13)