

**Week Two: *The Problem with Mind Reading***  
***James 4:2-4***

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day One**

1. Read James 4:2-4. When you consider the conflicts in most of your relationships, what percentage of them would you say were caused by the fact that the other person “should know you better than *that* by now”?
2. When you think about your disappointments with God, what percentage of them are because he knows your desires, yet he does not seem to provide them?
3. What reason does God give us in verse 2 for why we may not have all of our wants met?
4. Think about a specific example of something that is typically understood as your “job.” Maybe you are the lawn maintenance person, the dishwasher, or the dog walker? How does it feel when someone asks *if* you are going to do that job? Does it make your job more or less bearable when you are appreciated when you do your task?
5. It’s funny how the tone of a posed question has so much to say about our reaction to it, especially if it is something we already feel the responsibility to perform. “Will you wash the dishes?” is vastly different than “Oh, you’re going to wash the dishes?” Keeping this in mind, what tone of expectation do you usually take with God while praying? Do you assume that some things are just his job, or do you humbly ask him for what you need?
6. Read Romans 8:31-32. How would your prayer life be different if you took the posture of making humble requests of God, demonstrating that after all he has provided you, he does not owe you more?
7. James 4:2 seems such an obvious answer to why we don’t have what we ask. God desires to give good things to his children, but not to their detriment. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Confess those times when you have complained about unmet need but failed to humbly ask God for it in the first place.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two**

1. Read James 4:2-4. These verses are the answer to the question posed in verse 1. What was the question?
2. What internal desires do you have that cause conflict in your relationships?
3. Did your answer come to you quickly, or did you have to think about it? Explain your answer.
4. Is it easy or difficult for you to share your inner desires? Are you the kind of person who typically puts your cards on the table, or are those close to you regularly caught off guard by your reactions?

5. Describe a time when you were caught off guard by the reaction of someone with whom you are in a relationship. How did that feel to be surprised by their thoughts?
6. When you think about that particular disagreement, what part did each party's assumptions play in your disagreement?
7. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help open your mind to the part you play in your relationships this week so that you are able to look at them more objectively.

### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three**

8. Read Matthew 6:7-13. What do verses 7-8 say about God's understanding about our needs?
9. If God knows our needs, why does he want us to voice them to him?
10. Yesterday we looked at how we feel when someone takes us and our role for granted. In what ways do you sometimes take God and his provision for you for granted?
11. What about the opposite? How does it feel when someone anticipates your needs and provides a fulfillment of that need in some way?
12. Read Matthew 7:9-11. Describe a time when God gave you an unexpected gift. How did that feel?
13. Our relationship with God is an interesting dynamic. He is the only one who actually knows all of our needs without us asking, yet he wants to hear from us anyway. Why do you think he wants this? (Hint: think of a parent-child relationship.)
14. Close your FIFTEEN thanking God for providing for you, even when you have taken him for granted.

### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four**

15. Modern marriage has evolved from a social contract that provided social and economic stability and the procreation of children to the be-all, end-all of relationships, often referred to as a soul mate. Do you think this has been a good thing or bad thing for marriages? Explain your answer.
16. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. The instructions for Christian households are pretty plain — husbands and wives are to put each other first. What does verse 21 give as motivation to do this?

17. Looking again at Ephesians 5:21-33, you may notice that mind reading is not listed as part of serving your spouse in love, yet so often this is the standard by which we judge another's love for us. Describe a specific example that you have seen or have been a part of.
  
18. How might any relationship benefit by letting go of the lofty notion?
  
19. Read Proverbs 13:12. How is the fulfillment of needs described in these verses?
  
20. If unfulfilled longings can make you heartsick, wouldn't it be better to ask for what you need instead of hoping another can guess your needs? Why or why not?
  
21. Intense dissatisfaction comes from putting demands on a relationship; it's not intended to bear. If you struggle with this kind of expectation in your marriage or other relationships, end your FIFTEEN by committing those hurt feelings to God. Ask him to help you let go of unrealistic expectations.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five**

22. Yesterday we looked at the unrealistic expectation of demanding the people in our lives should be able to read our minds and anticipate our needs. What other expectations do we unfairly put on relationships?
  
23. Look again at James 4:2-4. What is the reason in verse 2 that we do not get what we ask for from God?
  
24. Since we have established earlier this week that the relationships in our lives cannot be expected to read our minds, what other reasons could there be for why we don't get what we want from our earthly relationships? (See Proverbs 18:1-2 for insight.)
  
25. In light of the pitfalls of the behaviors in Proverbs 18:1-2, what behaviors can we do to improve our relationships with each other? Take a few minutes to brainstorm a list.
  
26. Read Proverbs 16:24. How can we use words to help us get the things we need from others?
  
27. End your final FIFTEEN this week by committing to improving your relationships by letting go of unrealistic expectations and asking God to help make them fuller and more meaningful.