

Week Two: Pursuit
1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. What is something that you had to work really long and hard to obtain? A goal, a relationship, a position? What made it worth it to you to pursue?
2. Now read two of Jesus' most enigmatic parables: the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Value in Matthew 13:44-46. What is the common theme of these two stories?
3. What do you think the pearl and the treasure represent? Who do you think the man and the merchant represent?
4. Most people tend to think the pearl/treasure is heaven, and the man/merchant is us. If this is true, what is the moral of the story?
5. However, the story might make more sense if we understood the man/merchant as God. And the pearl/treasure represents...us! How does this change the intent of the parable?
6. If God has given up everything (the life of his Son) for the sake of pursuing us, how does knowing that change your sense of worth or identity?
7. As you end your FIFTEEN today, ask God to help you internalize the true value you have—you are priceless, because he paid a divine ransom for you!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. What is the benefit to most people of “being in relationships”? What concrete needs do we have filled by being friends, co-workers, lovers?
9. Based on your thoughts, is the seeking of a new relationship more often self-beneficial or other-beneficial? Are we generally seeking our own good from a new person or seeking their betterment?
10. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. What is Paul's goal for seeking new relationships?
11. How did that goal change the methods Paul was able to use?
12. How might all those different people have felt, if they perceived that Paul was not seeking them out for his own gain

but only for their own benefit?

13. How could you change your focus for your own relationships to prioritize their needs over your own?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying for God to fill you with his abundance, so that out of the overflow of his blessing for you, you can choose to be a blessing to others.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. When you pursue a friendship, or a romantic relationship, or a networking opportunity, how much planning and effort do you tend to put in?
16. There is a very sage bit of grape-related wisdom in the first Karate Kid movie. Watch this minute clip here: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3IQSxNdr3c>). What is Mr. Miyagi's point?
17. What are the consequences you've experienced of trying something half-heartedly?
18. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. What metaphor for faith relationships is Paul using in this section?
19. What level of intentionality does this teach that we should have towards any relationships that we pursue?
20. What is one thing you could do to be more purposeful when you seek new relationships with others?
21. Conclude your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you clarity and focus about why you are pursuing others so that you can be more intentional in all your new relationships!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Jim Carrey starred in a movie with a fascinating premise: a man decides to start saying "yes" to different experiences/people. You can watch the short trailer here: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fifBy4N3-k>) Based on this trailer, how did his life change once he said yes to so many different things?
23. Let's look again at 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. What different kinds of people does Paul "say yes" to being in relationship with?
24. What kinds of varied experiences do you think Paul would have had, compared to if he only hung out with other

middle-aged Jewish men?

25. Does your own life tend more towards “noes” or “yesses?” Why do you think that is?
26. What relationships do you have with people who are different from you—demographically, religiously, economically, etc.?
27. How might you pursue people of a wide array of backgrounds and enrich your own experiences in life?
28. As you finish your FIFTEEN, pray and ask God to reveal to you someone new that you could reach out to.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Have you ever known anyone who “won’t take no for an answer”? What tends to be our society’s opinion of these kinds of people?
30. On the one hand, we’re inspired by people who persevered in the face of rejection from others. On the other hand, nobody likes the creepy boss or stalker who won’t accept other people’s clear “no.” What do you think makes the difference between these two?
31. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. Paul seems pretty persistent. Do you think he’s more in “inspiring and persevering” territory, or “can’t take a hint” territory?
32. Look more closely at verse 22. What is Paul’s overarching goal for every relationship that he pursues?
33. If we truly only desire other people’s salvation, it helps us discern whether to push through someone else’s “no.” Think of a time when someone rejected an offer or a bid of connection you made: were you bothered more because of how it made you feel, or because you thought their choice would harm them in the long run?
34. Think of a current relationship you have that is strained and evaluate it. Are your intentions towards that person driven by how you are feeling about them or by how you can serve them? What would it look like for you to make a gesture of valuing their needs and not your own?
35. Finish your final FIFTEEN this week by asking God to give you his discernment and willpower to selflessly serve someone purely for their own benefit.