

Growing Deeper
Stranger Things

Week One: A Glimpse of Heaven
Luke 16:19-31

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. It's obvious humans are physical creatures, but not always clear that we are spiritual beings as well. Are you a "see it to believe it" person or are you easily aware of the unseen? How does this impact your spiritual journey?
2. Read Luke 16:19-31. Death can make us aware of the spiritual realm. Think through any experiences you've had with death. Were there indications of something beyond this world? What thoughts, feelings or conversations came from the experience?
3. Read Luke 16:14-18. Luke grouped teachings of Jesus that indicate that God sees behind appearances. How do the stories of the rich man and Lazarus fit this theme?
4. Why would Jesus want people to be aware that there is more than what is seen?
5. End your FIFTEEN in prayer by asking God to heighten your awareness of spiritual realities.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

6. Read Luke 16:19-31. How often do you think about heaven and hell?
7. What tends to remind you of the existence of heaven and hell?
8. How would an increased awareness of heaven and hell be beneficial?
9. It's been said, "We behave as we believe." In other words, our words and actions are a good test of what we think is true and important. What words or actions might indicate a belief in heaven and hell?
10. What do your behaviors indicate about heaven and hell?
11. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to open your eyes to what your behaviors indicate.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

12. Let's focus on heaven. If someone asked you to describe heaven, what would you say?

13. While the point of the parable is not to teach the details of the spiritual realities, some truths about spiritual reality can be discerned. Read Luke 16:19-31. What do you learn about death and the afterlife? What does this passage teach us about heaven?

14. Read some or all of the following and list clues about heaven.
 - a. Matthew 6:9

 - b. Matthew 25:34

 - c. Luke 23:40-43

 - d. 1 Peter 3:22

 - e. Revelation 21:1-5

15. What surprises you in these clues about heaven? What encourages you? What makes you long for heaven?

16. Jesus calls Lazarus' destination "Abraham's side". This apparently refers to a place of paradise for Old Testament believers like Abraham. Why do you think Jesus uses a person to describe heaven? Read John 14:1-6. How much of our understanding of heaven comes from being with the person of Jesus?

17. The passage does not specifically state why Lazarus went to heaven. Jesus may have chosen the name Lazarus because it is the Greek form of a Hebrew name which means "God is his help" or "God has delivered." How does this explain why Lazarus was considered righteous and worthy of heaven?

18. Finish your FIFTEEN by taking a moment to pray, thanking God for specific aspects of heaven. Thank Jesus for opening the way to heaven by taking our sin and giving us his righteousness.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

19. How would you describe hell?

20. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What do you learn about hell from this story from Jesus?

21. Can you have heaven without having a hell? Why do you think Jesus talks about a place of torment?

22. Whatever the parable indicates about the details of the spiritual realm, it clearly teaches that there is more beyond our physical life. Skim Luke 16:19-31 again. In the parable, our choices have consequences in the spiritual realm. While our thoughts and actions do not make us right with God, how do our choices reveal our heart condition with God? Why are our daily choices important?
23. Jesus never leaves us with a warning without opening a window of hope somewhere in the story. Those that listen to God's Word and believe the One who rose from the dead will be saved from hell. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking Jesus to help you to focus on his rescue of you as you make your daily choices.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

24. Why do you think Christians might not want to be aware of spiritual realms? How might this impact others?
25. The Bible's descriptions of hell are difficult to read. They should be deeply disturbing to us. While those who have believed in Jesus should have no fear of hell, we should still think of it with great solemnity and sadness. God himself says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." (Ezekiel 33:11) How does the reality of heaven and hell change your priorities?
26. How could a heightened awareness of heaven and hell change how you relate to family, friends, and coworkers?
27. Awareness of spiritual realities drive us to compassion and urgency. The rich man went from indifference toward others to concern for them. What opportunities do you have to care for those God has placed around you?
28. God has shown us the path to become part of his kingdom. We have his rescue plan in the Bible. We have the convincing proof of Jesus' resurrection. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, consider all that it means to believe in and belong to God. Is that what you want for yourself? Is that what you want for others? Are you willing to trust that, no matter the sacrifices required, the struggle will be worth it to experience the Kingdom of God in your life now and in the age to come? If so, end by declaring so in prayer to God.