

Growing Deeper
The Gratitude Effect

Week One: Grateful people choose to see the good
James 1:2-4

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. How would you characterize your season of life just now? Is it a hard winter, a refreshing spring, an oppressive summer, or a chilly fall? Explain.
2. How has your year been? Is this a new season or has it gone on too long?
3. If it's a challenging time, when was it last pleasant? If it is pleasant, when was it last difficult?
4. When you think about most crops and how they grow, why do they need both rain and sunshine? Is life the same? How so?
5. Read James 5:7-11. Why is patience needed in life?
6. Based on how you are feeling about your present circumstance, is God asking too much?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. After reading James 5 above, pray for greater patience in life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read James 1:2-4. What part of those verses caught your attention?
9. What does James mean when he says, "Consider it pure joy"? Consider what? What makes that so hard for most people to do?
10. Read a parallel passage in Romans 5:1-5. In this passage, what reason does Paul give that makes it possible to rise above difficult circumstance?
11. What does being "justified through faith" have to do with the here and now? Doesn't our perfection in Christ just mean we can die with confidence in eternal life? What relevance does it have to life before death?
12. In Romans 5:2, what kind of hope is Paul talking about?

13. Look again at Romans 5:3-4. Is Paul saying that Christian hope means our troubles will eventually end, or that we will be blessed by our troubles because they are helpful in life? Explain.
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for a better understanding of the implications of the cross for life here and now.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Back to James 1:2-4. In verse three, Paul gives a reason for finding joy in all things. What purpose does it serve according to Paul? Has that been your experience?
16. When you experience difficult challenges in life, do you tend to sigh deeply or get fired up?
17. What do you think Paul means by perseverance (some versions say endurance)?
18. Do you think other people mostly feel sorry for you or feel you have it good? Why?
19. When things are good in your life, do you tend to believe it will lead to greater things or plan to enjoy it while it lasts, knowing things have a way of going south?
20. Do you think the “testing of faith” is essential to maintaining faith?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be supportive of someone who is experiencing a difficult season of testing.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Read James 1:4. What is the result God wants for those who consider trial to be joy in their life?
23. When potters fire their clay creations, what result do they hope to achieve?
24. How is a life that is tested by difficulty similar to clay that is pulled from a kiln?
25. Is it possible to be hardened by hardship and yet remain sensitive and vulnerable? Explain.
26. Do you think God wants Christians to develop tough skin? How might that be construed as a good thing? How might

it be a detriment to a Christian?

27. What do you think Paul meant when he said a mature Christian lacks nothing? Don't we always have room for improvement?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for God to help you overcome your rough edges and create a more content attitude in your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. If you could name one "thorn in the flesh" that is keeping you from experiencing total joy in your life, what would it be?
30. Is it possible there might be some good purpose for that difficulty you are experiencing? What might it be?
31. How do the life, death and victory of Jesus help you face your trials?
32. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. In that passage, what difference does the author suggest Jesus should make in our day-to-day life?
33. Why do Jesus' life, death and victory give us confidence in prayer?
34. What title or name do you most often use to address God in prayer? What does that say about your perception of God?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray the Lord's Prayer.