

## **Week Five: *The Commitment Trap***

### ***Proverbs 17:17***

#### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day One**

1. As you begin your first FIFTEEN for the week, think about a friend, maybe even your best friend. What thoughts come to mind when you think of that person?
2. Most often, any deep, meaningful relationship has gone through some stuff. It could be adversity between two people or adversity one person has faced and the other supported them through it. Most meaningful relationships require commitment of some kind. Overall, how would you describe the relationship in question #1? Has it been smooth? Rocky? Some of both? Explain.
3. Read Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Does the friend you've been thinking of fit this description? Why or why not?
4. How has this friend supported you through tough times you've faced?
5. Often, our best, closest friends are the ones who have endured the most with us. As you finish your FIFTEEN for today, thank God for the friends he has put in your life and pray that he would give you the strength and the power to be the kind of friend those around you need.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two**

6. To begin your FIFTEEN for today, read Proverbs 17:17 again. Think about what that looks like, specifically in your life with you and your closest friend or friends.
7. Today let's begin taking a look at the story of the friendship of Ruth and Naomi, found in the book of Ruth. When you have time, it would be helpful to read the entire book of Ruth. It's only four chapters. But this week we'll focus primarily on chapter 1. Naomi and her family were Jews living in Israel, but a famine there forced them to move to a nearby country called Moab. What do verses 3-5 say? What happened to Naomi's husband and sons? (Notice verse 4 says that Naomi's sons both married foreign women. We'll come back to that later.)
8. In addition to losing her family, Naomi had no one to provide for her. In Jewish culture, if a widow had no family, she was cared for by the community. But was Naomi in a Jewish culture anymore? In Moab, where she was now, it didn't work that way. What typically happens for widows today?
9. Just like Naomi needed someone to be her friend through both thick and thin, there are certainly people in your life who need close, committed friendships. Think about someone you know who currently needs a friend like that. What could you do to help fill that gap?
10. To finish your FIFTEEN for today, ask God to help you see those close to you or in your "sphere" who need a friend

to stick with them through “thick or thin.” Also, ask God to help you find and establish those committed, lifelong relationships that we all need.

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

11. To start your FIFTEEN for today, read all of Ruth chapter 1, especially if you didn't yesterday. In Ruth 1:10, as Naomi was preparing to leave, what did Naomi's two daughters-in-law say to her?
  
12. When Naomi told her two daughters-in-law what she was planning to do, they wanted to go with her. But how does she respond in verse 11?
  
13. Even though these three women weren't from the same background and didn't come from the same place, they obviously loved each other. Describe an example from your life where you've seen a similar relationship.
  
14. Naomi isn't the only one who suffered hardship in this story. Her two daughters-in-law, named Orpah and Ruth, suffered hardship as well. How easy do you think it would have been for the three of them to go their separate ways after their husbands had all died?
  
15. Unfortunately, we've all had relationships that fell apart when something bad happened or when things got tough. Looking back, what was it, specifically, that led to that relationship falling apart? How committed were you to one another?
  
16. As you finish your FIFTEEN for today, pray that God would give you the boldness and the power to embrace commitment, rather than running from it. Ask him to help you embrace the relationships he is leading you to truly commit to.

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

17. Once again, read Proverbs 17:17 and Ruth 1. (It's always good to spend time reading the same text again as new parts will stick out to you each time.) In verse 14, Orpah, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law, left Naomi and went back to her home country. But what did Ruth do?
  
18. Do you think we can really blame Orpah for leaving? It was completely understandable and Naomi told her she could leave several times. What would you have done if you were in her shoes?
  
19. Verse 14 says that Ruth “clung to her,” even after Naomi tried talking her out of it. What do you think made Ruth so committed to Naomi?
  
20. Committing to someone can be downright scary. In fact, commitment often means saying no to all the other good options out there. But our fear of commitment, especially outside of marriage, means we find ourselves bouncing

from relationship to relationship. Do you think God created us to be this way? Why or why not?

21. It's not exactly the same because they were husband and wife, but God created Adam and Eve to be together in a committed relationship. Look at Genesis 2:18. What did God say about man being alone? Is it good or bad?
22. As you finish your FIFTEEN for today, think about this: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Again, this isn't just speaking to romantic relationships. God created us to be in community, to be in committed relationships. To close today, pray as you feel led.

### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five**

23. Look at what Ruth says in Ruth 1:16-17. Not only was Ruth committed to Naomi, she was committing to Naomi's God, the one true God, as well. What do you think gave her the courage and confidence to do this?
24. Verse 22 says, "So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning." Not only did Ruth say she was committing to Naomi, but she actually did it. In our culture and world today, it seems so easy for "friends" to say one thing and then do another. How can you tell that Ruth truly meant what she said?
25. Throughout the week, you've likely been thinking of people close to you or in your "sphere" who need a friend to stick with them through "thick or thin." This sounds great in theory, but we can't all have hundreds of close friends. What can you do when you see someone in need of a close, committed friendship, but you don't feel like you can provide that? If we're being honest, we know we can't have close, committed relationships with everyone. So what else can you do?
26. We all seem to know lots of people, even if we're not close friends with them. Do you think one option would be to help connect those in need with each other? Why or why not?
27. Read Proverbs 17:17 one more time. Spend some significant time this weekend thinking about what that means. Think about how you can better be a true friend, a brother or sister, for someone who needs you right now, through thick and thin, in their time of adversity.
28. As you finish your last FIFTEEN of the week, spend some time thanking God for what he has revealed or brought to light for you this week. Ask him to help you not just respond with nice, holy-sounding words, but actually follow it up with action as you live to better serve others in his name.