

Week Two: *The Genius of Optimism*

Romans 5:1-5

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. How would you define the concept of hope?
2. What are some of the hopes in your life right now?
3. Read Romans 8:24-25. How does Paul define hope? How does that compare with your answer to #1?
4. Paul unpacks the concept of hope a little more in Romans 5:1-5. Read it and highlight the points Paul makes about hope that resonate with you.
5. What role does hope play in your relationship with God and your life of faith?
6. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God for a greater understanding of the hope He gives in Jesus. Pray that your life gives others a clear vision of that hope.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

7. Fill in the blank. "The glass is half _____."
8. In what areas of your life do you find yourself most optimistic? In what areas are you most pessimistic (or even cynical)?
9. In the Bible, David is commonly thought of as an incredibly successful warrior and king. But he also went through some incredibly challenging circumstances. At one of his lowest points, he was captured by his enemy and faced the possibility of death. It was in that moment, he wrote Psalm 56. Read this psalm and highlight key phrases that reflect his attitude.
10. Would you describe David as optimistic in this circumstance? Why or why not?
11. What does David's attitude teach you about being optimistic in difficult circumstances?
12. How could this way of looking at optimism affect your life right now? Is there someone in particular who could benefit from hearing this?

13. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for God to grant you optimism that is based on the hope that God will work in your life. Pray over the answers and people you mentioned in #12.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

14. Do you believe that faith makes it easier to deal with the reality of death? Why or why not?

15. One of the first churches established after Jesus died was in modern day Greece. Paul wrote a letter to this church encouraging optimism, even in the face of death. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What parts of this scripture resonate with you?

16. How does this scripture compare with your answer in #14? What hope does this text give you about death?

17. We often focus on the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins as primary to the Christian faith. That's definitely important, but that alone doesn't bring hope. Why is the resurrection pivotal to understanding Christianity?

18. Based on this scripture, how might you approach a conversation with someone who is facing death?

19. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Thank God for giving you the hope that because of Jesus' resurrection, death is not the end. Pray for those who do not have that hope and that God would use you to change their hearts.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

20. Take a moment and think about times in your life where you have completely failed. What happened and what got you through it?

21. Do you think it's naïve to be optimistic even in the midst of something you know is going to fail? Why or why not?

22. Around the year 720BC, the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed. At that time there was a prophet named Micah who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah and spoke some surprisingly optimistic words in the midst of this devastating failure. Read Micah 7:7-10 and summarize what you think Micah is hoping will happen.

23. Israel was destroyed because of its complete moral failure and rebellion against God. What does this text teach you about hope for people who feel the guilt and consequences of their sin?

24. Who in your life could benefit from these words? Do you know anyone living with the results of some bad

decisions? How would you take Micah's words and speak them in a relevant way to this person?

25. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray thanksgiving for how God has brought restoration to you despite your sins. Ask for God to give you the words to help those you thought of in question #24.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

26. Some people are so optimistic and lighthearted that just being around them helps you see the world a bit more the way they do. Do you know anyone like that? Why do you think they have such a worldview?
27. Do you believe that optimism is an innate quality or do you think it can be developed and strengthened? Explain.
28. John was a disciple of Jesus and his writings were clearly influenced by the worldview Jesus gave him. Read a few of his writings and quotes from Jesus and explain why this would help John be more optimistic:
- a. John 16:33

 - b. 1 John 5:14-15

 - c. John 14:27

 - d. John 10:27-29
29. Based on what you read from John, if you really took these scriptures to heart do you think you would develop a more optimistic view in your life? Why or why not?
30. One important way to cultivate optimism in your life is to bring it to the lives of others and see people transformed. Was there a day of this week's Growing Deeper that especially impacted your ability to see life with optimism? Make a plan to share that day (or at least its scripture and insights) with someone else in a conversation.
31. Finish your FIFTEEN praying that God would grant you a worldview based on hope. Pray for the plan and the person based on question #30 above. Ask for God to show you the right person and give you the opportunity to share your hope.