

Growing Deeper

Where is God When...

Week One: *He Seems Absent?*

Psalm 13

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Looking back over your life, what do you consider the most difficult period so far?
2. What made that time so difficult? Was it the hardship of the moment or not knowing how it would work out?
3. How did it resolve itself? How were you different after that experience?
4. Have the lessons you learned remained with you, or has time put that period in your rear-view mirror?
5. Read Romans 8:28. Does it say God causes all things? Is He to blame for hardship or at least not rescuing you from hardship? What does it say about God working in the midst of hardship?
6. Read Romans 5:1-5. What might be the benefit of hardship and misery?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to remember lessons learned in the past from blessings and hardships.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read James 5:10-11. Were the great men of the Bible spared hardship because they were faithful?
9. Why do you suppose God doesn't protect His own better than those who are not faithful to Him?
10. Do you know how any of the apostles died? How did their deaths serve God's purpose... or maybe they didn't?
11. Have you ever had it within your power to spare someone you love from hardship or struggle but didn't, not because you couldn't but because you thought it might do more harm than good? Why is that so hard for us?
12. Put yourself in God's shoes for a moment. God has not only the person He loves to consider, but the lesson that others around Him are learning by observation. What would happen if every time someone needed help, God stepped in? Have you ever known a child who was spared all hardships in life? How did that affect the child?

13. If you ruled the world, do you suppose things would be better or worse? Why?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer of acceptance and trust for all the times the outcome of a hardship did not turn out the way you wished. Thank God for His wisdom and willingness to take abuse from those who blame Him for everything.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Read Psalm 13. What verse or main thought jumped out at you?
16. Have you ever prayed an angry prayer towards God? Have you ever gotten angry with a loved one or a friend who disappointed you? Is there a difference between the two?
17. According to verse one, what accusation was David making against God? Some would say, “Either God doesn’t really care, or he’s impotent.” Is there another explanation?
18. In Psalm 13:2, David admits wrestling with his thoughts and being depressed. Are those attitudes the result of weak faith, or can faithful people (true believers) still be confused and depressed over a life situation? Explain.
19. David felt God was allowing his enemy to triumph over him. Name some enemies that are fighting for the upper hand in your life. Does it ever feel like you are fighting a losing battle? Do you think it’s okay to get mad at God for His apparent lack of concern? Explain.
20. What would you tell a Christian friend who is facing a hard time and is angry with God? (Or is it best to let them vent and say nothing?) Would you react the same way towards an unbelieving friend? Why or why not?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for a friend you know who is confused by God’s apparent lack of concern for their hardship.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Why was David so concerned about what his enemies and adversaries thought about his present hardship?
23. Have you ever worried about what others were thinking about God’s (supposed) lack of blessing in your life? Why did you care?
24. Read Romans 11:33-36. Why is it impossible to know the mind of God?

25. Do you want your God to be so small you could understand His actions and plans, or would you prefer a God whose ways and wisdom far surpasses your ability to comprehend? Why do so many people judge God by human standards?
26. When you were a child, how fast did time fly? How often did a birthday or Christmas come each year? Now that you are older, how often do they come? Read Psalm 90:4. What does it mean?
27. As children (by comparison to God), we focus on the near-term, but God focuses on eternity. What difference does that focus make in prioritizing single events or single lifetimes?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for a more gracious spirit towards God's actions (or inaction), especially those you find hard to accept.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Read the Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13:24-30. Who sowed the weeds?
30. Why did some suspect that the seed the master sowed was low quality?
31. Is God responsible for sin, death and hardship in life?
32. Read Revelation 12:7-12. How does this passage explain evil coming to the perfect world God created?
33. Why do people tend to blame God for hardship and forget about the Devil?
34. When will evil be eradicated from life? See 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.
35. Read Isaiah 40:29-31 and Galatians 6:9. What hope do we have to survive these hard times until the Lord returns and ushers in the perfect world God has prepared for those who love Him?
36. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for those who are having a hard time trusting God in the midst of their hardship, when God seems far away.