

Growing Deeper

The Nine Paths: Finding Your Unique Approach to Growth, Relationships and Spirituality

Week One: *The Path of Strength*

2 Corinthians 12:9-11

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you in asking for help? (With 10 being very comfortable with it and 1, being least comfortable.)
2. Describe how asking for help makes you feel. What about asking others for help makes you comfortable or uncomfortable?
3. Some peoples have an exceptionally strong need for self-reliance. How does that affect one's ability to ask for help?
4. How about with God? How does a strong need for self-reliance affect our relationship with God?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-11. What does Paul, the author of this passage say about weakness?
6. How does our weakness demonstrate God's power?
7. End your FIFTEEN by confessing your inability to fully rely on God. Ask him to help you experience his strength through your weaknesses. .

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Describe a time when you, or someone you know, ever refused help on a project, and winded up all alone to solve the problem. How did the situation resolve?
9. What sometimes drives people to decline help in situations like this?
10. How is the need for self-reliance often displayed in people that do not want to admit weakness?
11. How does someone's need for self-reliance affect his or her relationships with others? (If you are in a relationship with someone that this describes, speak specifically about your own relationship with him or her.)

12. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. How did Paul, the author approach people?
13. One of the pitfalls of self-reliance can ultimately be isolation. How can we use our weaknesses to strengthen our relationships instead of allowing them to isolate ourselves?
14. As you finish your FIFTEEN, think about the ways that hiding your weaknesses has allowed you to isolate from others. Ask God in prayer to help you recognize when you do this and to give you the courage to be honest about your needs.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. When you think of strong people, who comes to your mind? What in particular makes you think of them?
16. Do you consider strength a good quality? Why or why not?
17. In what ways can strength become a bad thing?
18. Today were going to look again at 2 Corinthians 12:9-11, but first back up to 2 Corinthians 12:1-8 and see why Paul, the author, is talking about this in the first place. Why was Paul boasting about his weakness?
19. By all accounts, Paul was a strong man. Read 1 Timothy 1:13-16. How had he used his strength in the past?
20. Paul is not alone; the pursuit of strength for the sake of strength can lead many people down a destructive path. How did God redeem the terrible misuse of Paul's power?
21. Describe a current day situation where the misuse of strength has been destructive? What could be done to rectify that situation?
22. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you recognize situations where strength is misused.

Spend FIFTEEN -Day Four

23. One of the downsides of being strong is that strong people are always expected to be strong. Is that a realistic expectation? Why or why not?
24. What happens to people who believe they are expected to be strong all of the time? In other words, what happens

when that expectation becomes too great a burden to bear?

25. Does God expect people to be strong all of the time? Explain your answer.
26. Read the following verses and note how God is described.
- a. Exodus 6:6
 - b. Exodus 33:14
 - c. 1 Kings 8:56
 - d. Matthew 11:28
27. Did someone in particular come to mind today when you were thinking about people who feel the need to be strong all of the time? Someone you love, maybe even yourself? What would you say to him or her, (or yourself) about what God expects of them?
28. End your FIFTEEN in prayer by asking God to speak into the heart of a person who is over-burdened by the need to be strong for others. Ask God to fill him or her with his peace.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. Sometimes being strong means you always feel like you are fighting something or someone, even God. Describe a time when you have felt this way.
30. How does it feel to finally let go of a fight?
31. This week, we have looked at the pitfalls of being of strength for the sake of strength and over self-reliance. What would you prescribe as the antidote for this type of behavior?
32. Look again at 2 Corinthians 12:9-11. What did Paul suggest in these verses?
33. On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you in sharing your weaknesses? (With 10 being very comfortable with it and 1, being least comfortable.)
34. It's been said that the first step to change is admitting that you need to change. What would happen if you decided to stop fighting alone and allowed someone to help you? How would your life be better?