

# going deeper

**Bible stories** offer us an amazing opportunity to watch people in action. Sometimes they are good examples, sometimes not, but even the bad examples have something to teach us.

**You try it:** Pick a “bad person” in the Bible—say, Cain in Genesis 4:1-12. Read the passage. Then answer these questions.

1. What did he do wrong?
2. Why did he do it? What might have driven him to do what he did?
3. Have you ever felt something like that? How did you respond? Are there any parallels between how you responded and how Cain did? Explain.
4. You might not resort to murder, but have you ever gone overboard faced with a similar situation and emotions?
5. Now go back and try and go deeper on each question. What are the *real* issues?

**Psalm 139:16,23,24:** Our lives unfold like \_\_\_\_\_. At times they seem totally random, but actually, they’re full of predictable \_\_\_\_\_. Learning to read these patterns is critical for spiritual growth.

**Sinful patterns** frame the predictable \_\_\_\_\_ we follow into sin.

**Spirit patterns** frame God’s repeated attempts to \_\_\_\_\_ us \_\_\_\_\_.

This is a story about when I know something is \_\_\_\_\_ but I want it anyway. **Numbers 22:1-7**

### 1. Temptations

The wrong thing rarely goes down without a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Playing with fire (22:19).** The wrong thing often feels \_\_\_\_\_ at the edges.

### 2. Opposition: 22:22, 24, 26

\_\_\_\_\_ stands between us and the wrong thing.

### 3. Shooting the messenger: 22:21-30

The wrong thing often awakens a \_\_\_\_\_ spirit to protect itself.

### 4. Loopholes: 22:18,19; 23:3,15,29,30; Revelation 2:14

The wrong thing seems \_\_\_\_\_ when you’re being irrational.

“Technically speaking...”

### 5. End of the line: Numbers 31:7,8

The wrong thing doesn’t usually cave in on you until \_\_\_\_\_.

### 6. On the road again

Back to the prayer:

“Search me, Oh God, and know my heart. Test me, and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (**Psalm 139:23,24**)

*Ask God to help you do one thing in each category that applies to you each week—as a disciple, a spouse, and / or a parent. Just think: Into one year, you’ll have made 52 investments in your relationship with God, 52 investments in your marriage, 52 investments in your kids.  
—That’s a changed life!*

## **FOR YOU**

*Sit down with God today and ask him this question: Lord, is there an issue in my life that I’m rationalizing away by saying, “I’m kind of obeying”? Ask him to reveal the places in your life where this is true. Deal with the issues that come up.*

## **FOR COUPLES**

Marriage provides an ideal context to speak into each other’s lives when we’re living in ways that aren’t God’s best. Unfortunately, more messengers get shot down in marriage than in any other relationship. Sit down this week and talk about how hard it can be to tell each other the truth in love. Give each other permission to do that for each other. If there are recent episodes where a defensive spirit rose up, confess that to each other and let the grace of Jesus flow.

## **FOR PARENTS**

Be aware that God often uses our children to hold up mirrors to show us our weaknesses. Don’t be too proud to admit it when you’ve blown it, or when they show you something about yourself that needs changing. Ask for forgiveness and model a teachable spirit instead of a defensive one. If you can do that one thing this week, you’ll have grown as a parent.

## **FOR LIFE GROUPS**

Follow through with your Life Group using these questions:

1. Briefly re-cap Sunday’s message. What stood out to you, and why? Try reading Numbers 22-24 yourselves. What do you notice from your own study?
2. When you are trying to make a decision, do you ever get a “gut feeling” that one thing or another is right or wrong? Explain.
3. Is there a place in your life where you think you’ve been just “Kind of obeying?” Explain your situation in the group, and ask them if you’re rationalizing or not.
4. Have you noticed God “opposing you” as you continued in that direction?
5. Are you good at receiving guidance, or do you tend to “shoot the messenger?”
6. What do you think God is saying to you through this study? What will you do about it?