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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

January 28, 2024

God Breathed Week #1 / Pastor Paul Taylor

Fall In Love With The Word

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | We all have different things we love to do in our spare time. What are your top two or three things you love to do when you have extra hours in the week to get you refreshed?
2. Rivers Crossing 21 Day Fast | Discussion Questions

On January 14th, Rivers Crossing began our annual churchwide time of fasting and prayer. Use the following questions to engage with the fast as a Community Group.

 - We're more than halfway through the fast! How has your experience been so far? In what way(s) have you heard from God or seen Him move during this time?
 - Are there specific things, whether personal or churchwide, you're praying for? Do you sense that any of those prayer requests have been answered by God?
3. Looking back on Pastor Paul's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

Matthew 9:14-15 (NLT) – ¹⁴One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?” ¹⁵Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

DIVING DEEPER

4. The Bible and You | Discussion Questions
 - a) Pastor Paul shared that the Bible isn't just any book. How would you articulate what the Bible is? How do the Bible's own words support this description?
 - b) For the past decade, Barna and the American Bible Society have published a report titled “State of the Bible.” Linked below is a graphic from their 2021 report.

State of The Bible Graphic | How often do you use the Bible on your own?
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZIUdN62UoDxmUiLWB2dZDV7xwnuuVZP6/view?usp=share_link

Half (50%) of United States (U.S.) adults read their Bible less than twice a year (including “never”). That’s the last three bars on your right in the graphic summed up. Just over one-third of U.S. adults (34%) read their Bible once a week or more. That’s the first four bars on your left in the graphic summed up. Only one in six U.S. adults (16%) read their Bible four or more days during the week.

How often do you engage with – whether through listening, reading, or studying – your Bible? What does your time with the Bible typically look like?

c) Many of us likely have a desire to read the Bible, but struggle to do so with consistency. There's a gap between our desire to read the Bible and our habit of Bible reading. If you recognize this gap in your life, why do you believe it exists? In other words, what thing(s) keep you from more deeply engaging with the Bible?

5. Throughout the pages of the Bible, God declares the benefits of reading, studying, and applying His Word. Read the following passages together before discussing the corresponding questions.

Psalm 1 (NIV) – ¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
⁴Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 119:89-93 (NLT) – ⁸⁹Your word, Lord, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.
⁹⁰Your faithfulness continues through all generations;
you established the earth, and it endures.
⁹¹Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.
⁹²If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
⁹³I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV) – ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

John 5:39-40 (NIV) – ³⁹You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

What stands out to you from these passages? How have you experienced these benefits (or others) as you've engaged with and obeyed God's Word?

6. Pastor Paul stressed the importance of not just reading and knowing God's Word, but living out God's Word. In your recent engagement with the Bible, where have you been challenged to better live in alignment with its words?

Matthew 7:24-29 (NIV) – ²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” ²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

TAKING IT HOME

7. In 2009, the Center of Bible Engagement polled 40,000 people about their Bible reading and published findings by researchers Arnold Cole and Pamela Ovwigho. The study showed that when people engaged their Bible one time a week, there was negligible effect on key areas of their life. The same is true for engaging your Bible two times per week. With three times, the researchers saw small improvements in the quality of life. But when day four was reached, the effects spiked:

Those who read their Bible at least four times per week experience:

- Feeling lonely drops 30%
- Anger issues drop 32%
- Bitterness in relationships drops 40%
- Alcoholism drops 57%
- Sex outside of marriage drops 68%
- Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%
- Viewing pornography drops 61%
- Sharing your faith jumps 200%
- Discipling others jumps 230%

Incredible right?! Loving God’s Word is a process that takes time and discipline, but it helps us experience the extraordinary life found in Jesus Christ. No matter how long we’ve been reading the Bible, we can always grow.

What would it look like for you to engage God’s Word on a deeper level in 2024? How can your Community Group help?

8. Prayer Prompt | How can your Community Group pray for you and your family?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Unity Night | Join us for Unity Night of worship, where churches across Cincinnati will come together to worship Jesus together. We'll be gathering at Vineyard Cincinnati Church on February 4th at 6pm. We can't wait to worship with you!
Vineyard Cincinnati Address | 11340 Century Cir E, Springdale, OH 45246
2. Baby Dedication | Have you welcomed a new baby to your family over the last year? Congratulations! We're excited to celebrate your child at Baby Dedication on March 9th. The Baby Dedication experience will teach you how to lead your child in their faith, show you ways that Rivers Crossing will partner with you on this journey, and give you the opportunity to dedicate your child. Learn more and register below.
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1978441>
3. Serve at Rivers Crossing | One of the marks of a fully engaged follower is their willingness to invest into God's kingdom with their time, talents, and resources. We have opportunities to serve all throughout the week! Find the team that's the right fit for you and partner with us to create an environment for people to become fully engaged followers of Jesus. Learn more at <https://riverscrossing.com/serve-here/>



COMMUNITY GROUPS

MISSION AND VISION

Groups Mission:

To provide people an opportunity to experience loving community as they pursue being a fully engaged follower of Christ.

Community Groups Vision:

To gather together regularly to share, study the Bible, and support one another. Community Groups are sermon-based, meaning they study a set of Bible passages and questions connected to the previous weekend's sermon.

Healthy Community Groups:

Community Groups are designed so that we can love and care for one another and put God's Word into action – all in pursuit of experiencing and living the extraordinary life. As you lead, keep the following in mind for evaluating the health of your group:

- **ENGAGE:** Groups are only successful when people invest their time and energy to genuinely engage the process by attending regularly, being honest, and developing relationship with other group members. This takes time, but it's worth it. | *Acts 2:42-27, Colossians 3:12-17*
- **ENCOURAGE:** One of the primary roles your group will play is in encouraging one another forward in your individual walks with Christ. This includes supporting one another through the messiness and trials of life.
 - *Hebrews 10: 23-25*
- **EQUIP:** Regularly encountering God's Word through the sermon, group discussion, and personal study will, over time, equip each group member to be a more fully engaged follower of Jesus. As this information permeates the heart, the Holy Spirit will provide application and personal growth.
 - *2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 14:25-26*
- **EMPOWER:** As your group meets, you will see some people naturally begin to exhibit spiritual gifts including leadership, shepherding, and hospitality. Be on the lookout for these developments. Empower these individuals to step into larger roles within the group, to consider leading or hosting their own group, or to serve where led. | *Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 3:10-14*
- **EXPAND:** As each member of your group begins to invest in their "8 to 15," it's natural for your group to add new members and to connect others into groups ministry. | *John 13:34-35*