

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH



Community Group Discussion Guide – A Radiant Christmas Week #1

Christmas Light / December 5, 2021 / Pastor Paul Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | How much are lights a part of your Christmas season and celebration? Do you decorate your home, whether outside or inside, with lights? Perhaps you visit Cincinnati Zoo's Festival of Lights, drive through Coney Island's Christmas Nights of Lights, or attend a tree lighting ceremony.

2. This is the final week of the Fall Quarter. If this is your last group for the year, we encourage you to spend time reflecting and celebrating. Below are questions that can set the stage for this time together.
 - a) Reflect on your last several months in group. What has God been teaching you and where have you grown in your faith? How has the group supported you during this season?

b) Reflect on the past year. What are you most thankful for? What events and relationships have grown your character, impacted your relationship with God, and affected how you live out your faith?

Psalm 107:1-3 (NIV) – ¹Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. ²Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, ³those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

c) The Winter Quarter begins in late January 2022. Does your group plan to continue meeting? If yes, are there any changes you'd like to implement? For example – shared group leadership, logistical changes (day, time, childcare plans), welcoming new group members, increased focus on prayer, etc.

3. The Bible uses an abundance of light imagery (both literal and figurative) to describe the holiness and character of God, God's role as Creator, God's Word, the person of Jesus, salvation in Jesus, and what it means to follow God. Below are a few examples of this imagery found throughout the Bible.

Isaiah 9:2 (NLT) – The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

Ezekiel 10:4 (NIV) – Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the Lord.

Psalm 119:105 (NLT) – Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

Luke 1:78-79 (NLT) – ⁷⁸Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”

Revelation 21:22-23 (NIV) – ²²I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Why do you think God chose to describe and reveal himself using the imagery of light? Is there anything about this imagery you find helpful as you seek to understand and follow God?

DIVING DEEPER

4. Pastor Paul shared that upon receiving salvation in Jesus Christ, a person moves out of spiritual darkness and into the light of a restored relationship with God. Reflect on your spiritual journey. How has the true light of Christmas – Jesus – extinguished darkness and brought radiance and fullness into your life?

John 10:9-10 (NLT) – ⁹Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Ephesians 5:8-9 (NLT) – ⁸For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

5. There’s a repeated call, especially in the New Testament, for followers of Jesus Christ to walk in the light and live in a manner that genuinely reflects the holiness and heart of God. Read **1 John 1:5-10** together and discuss the corresponding questions.

1 John 1:5-10 (NLT) – ⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

- a) How does this passage illuminate what it means to live in the light?

- b) Confessing sin deepens our fellowship with God and with others and helps us walk in the light. Is confessing sin a regular practice for you when spending time privately with God? Are transparency and confession present in your earthly relationships? Explain your answers.

6. During the Advent season, Christians reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ and look ahead with hope and anticipation for the second Advent, when Jesus Christ will return and finalize God's plan of redemption. Read Revelation 21:9-22:5 together. This passage provides a vision of the glorious future that Christians await with God in the new creation. Then discuss the corresponding questions.¹

1. Questions adapted from *The Gospel of Advent: Devotional Readings from Christianity Today*.

Revelation 21:9-22:5 (NIV) –⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.¹³There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.¹⁶The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.¹⁷The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick.¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.²¹The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²²I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.²³The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.²⁵On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.²⁶The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.²⁷Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

- a) What strikes you most about this beautiful imagery and the descriptions of shining light and God's illuminating glory?

- b) While the book of Revelation is hard to fully grasp, one thing is clear – the most captivating part of heaven will be experiencing the fullness of God’s presence. How much of our capacity to shine as lights in this world (Matthew 5:14-16) do you believe is connected with our practice of being in God’s presence? What next step can you take to deepen your relationship with God?

TAKING IT HOME

7. Pastor Paul shared that like a light switch, we sometimes turn our relationship with God off and on in different places of our life. And for many of us, the areas where we turn our relationship with God off often fail to experience the radiance of God. Do you recognize this “light switch” pattern in your life? If so, how can you invite God into the parts of your life where you’ve previously been unwilling to do so? How can your group members best support you?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. Men’s Ministry Event | Men’s Ministry is hosting a watch party for the Thursday Night Football game on December 9th. The event begins at 8:00pm and will take place offsite at COhatch Mason. Snacks and drinks will be provided and men are encouraged to invite a friend to join. For additional information, including an address for COhatch Mason, visit <https://subsplash.com/riverscrossing/lb/ev/+5j2z7y9>.
2. Women’s Ministry | Registration is open for the Winter sessions of Women’s Bible Study and Restoration: Beauty From Ashes. To learn more and sign up, visit <https://riverscrossing.com/womens-groups/>.
3. Christmas Conspiracy | During Christmas Conspiracy, we come together as a church family to spend less, give more, love all, and worship fully. We’ll be taking a special offering on Sunday December 19th. 100% of the proceeds of this offering go to support our local missions work through Joshua’s Place and church planting. You can join the conspiracy by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/christmas-conspiracy/>.
4. Christmas Eve at Rivers Crossing | Join us for a family-friendly candlelight service! Childcare is available for kids preschool and younger. Service times for our Christmas Eve services are listed below.
Mason | Thursday, December 23rd at 5pm and 7pm
Mason | Friday, December 24th at 3pm, 5pm, 11pm
Deer Park | Friday, December 24th at 5pm