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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

November 19, 2023

Foundations of Faith Week #7 / Pastor Paul Taylor

An Eternal Perspective

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Share a memorable Thanksgiving mishap or funny story from your past celebrations. What are your plans for Thanksgiving this year?
2. Much of the urgency in James' writing is motivated by his expectation of Jesus' second coming and his hope for eternity spent with God. Read the following verses and quote before discussing the corresponding questions.

James 5:7-8 (NIV) – ⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

“Here's a simple fact we don't ponder enough: God has not only secured a perfect future for his people, he has vividly described that future for us in the pages of the Bible. Why? Because he's not content with the timid, fragile living produced by a wimpy vision of the future. God wants his people longing for the new creation, up on tiptoe, living toward it. He wants us restlessly patient for the future so that we're incredibly productive in the present. That's why he's told us how good it's going to be.”

- Stephen Witmer | <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/eternity-changes-everything>

a) From what you've read in the Bible, how would you describe eternity and/or heaven? If you don't believe there's an afterlife, share about why.

b) Have you spent much time thinking about life in eternity? Do you think there's a strong longing for eternity in your heart? If this longing hasn't been strong, why do you think that's been the case?

3. Read James 4:13-5:11 together. What stands out to you from this passage? Reflecting on this week's teaching from Pastor Paul, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

James 4:13-5:11 (NIV) – ³Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

¹Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have

condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you. ⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

DIVING DEEPER

4. During his sermon, Pastor Paul shared a list of attributes that define living with an eternal perspective. The first three of those attributes involve accepting that – 1) our time is short, 2) our purpose is God's plan, and 3) our possessions are not our own. Read the following quote before discussing the corresponding questions.

“When a Christian realizes his citizenship is in heaven, he begins acting as a responsible citizen of earth. He invests wisely in relationships because he knows they're eternal. His conversations, goals and motives become pure and honest because he realizes these will have a bearing on everlasting reward. ...He gives generously of time, money, and talent because he's laying up treasure for eternity. He spreads the good news of Christ because he longs to fill heaven's ranks with his friends and neighbors. All this serves the pilgrim well not only in heaven, but on earth; for it serves everyone around him.”

- Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home*

- a) Have you had any experiences that have caused you to “number your days?” If so, how did these impact your life, relationships, and/or priorities?

Psalm 39:4-7 (NLT) – ⁴“Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—how fleeting my life is. ⁵You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath.” ⁶We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth, not knowing who will spend it. ⁷And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.

- b) How would you answer this question that Pastor Paul posed during his sermon – Do I know and am I living God's purpose for my life?

If you're unsure how to answer, where might you begin discovering this?

- c) Read Matthew 6:19-21. What are some ways in which you've already stored up treasure in heaven rather than on earth? Are there additional ways you could do that in your own life? If so, how can you start?

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV) – ¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

5. The last attribute of living with an eternal perspective is recognizing that our trials are temporary. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 and discuss the corresponding questions.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 (NIV) – ⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

¹³It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. ¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

a) How might thinking about eternity change our perspective on trials?

b) If you're currently walking through a trial, what might God want to speak to you concerning this trial from the perspective of eternity? How about from the perspective of His character, love, and eternal promises?

TAKING IT HOME

6. Thanksgiving Reflection | Read Psalm 30, then reflect on and discuss the following:

a) In this current season of your life, what are you thankful for?

b) Over the past year, how have you experienced God's healing, restoration, protection, mercy, and joy? Have you praised Him for those things?

Psalm 30 (NIV)

- ¹ I will exalt you, Lord,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
² Lord my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
³ You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.
⁴ Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment,

but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

⁶ When I felt secure, I said,
“I will never be shaken.”

⁷ Lord, when you favored me,
you made my royal mountain stand firm;
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.

⁸ To you, Lord, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:

⁹ “What is gained if I am silenced,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?

Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

¹⁰ Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;
Lord, be my help.”

¹¹ You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹² that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
Lord my God, I will praise you forever.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Baptisms – Sunday November 26th | We believe baptism is an integral part of your spiritual journey and necessary as you seek to become a fully engaged follower of Christ. If you’ve recently decided to follow Jesus or you’ve been a Christ follower for a while but never gotten baptized, now is the perfect time to take this next step! Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/grow>
2. 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/>
3. Christmas Eve at Rivers Crossing | Experience the joy of Christmas! Between bright carols, twinkling lights, and falling snow, your kids will love our candlelight service. Most importantly, you’ll leave with heartwarming memories and hope for the future.

Mason Service Times	Deer Park Service Times
Friday 12/22 – 7pm	
Saturday 12/23 – 1pm and 3pm	
Sunday 12/24 – 8:45am, 10:15am, 12pm and 11pm*	Sunday 12/24 – 10am

For Christmas Eve, RC Kids programming is provided for kids in Preschool and younger. Kids in Kindergarten and older are invited to attend our services.

**There is no RC Kids programming for the 11pm service at Mason on 12/24.*