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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

May 26, 2024

Summer Book Tour Week #1 / When God Seems Gone

Pastor Adam Mabry (Aletheia Church)

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. It's the final week of the Spring Quarter for Community Groups! Use the following questions to reflect, celebrate, and look ahead.
 - a) Reflect on the first five months of 2024. What has God taught you and where have you grown in your faith? How has the Community Group supported you?

Rivers Crossing Groups – Share Your Experience Form:

<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/414675>

- b) What have you appreciated about and/or learned from other people in group? If you have a word of encouragement, share it publicly (or privately) with them!

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 (NLT) – ¹⁰Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

- c) The Summer Quarter (June through August) is one of encouraged rest. What are the group's plans for the summer? How can you stay connected?
- d) The Fall Quarter begins in September. Does your group plan to continue meeting in the Fall? 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.

2. Share a time when you felt like God was silent in your life. Perhaps this was through an unanswered prayer or an unresolved problem. How did you respond during that period? What was it like for you emotionally and spiritually?

DIVING DEEPER

3. As he preached on the prophet Habakkuk (1:1-4), Pastor Adam examined the biblical notion of lament. Laments actually constitute the largest category of psalms in the Psalter; there are more than 60, including both individual and corporate laments. Individual laments, which either express or presume deep trust in God, portray a person expressing struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord.¹ These psalms can serve as our models for communicating with God when He seems silent.

1. Adapted from *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

As a group, read through Psalm 22 – an example of an individual lament psalm and the psalm Pastor Adam connected with Jesus' words on the cross. Then discuss the corresponding questions.

Psalm 22 (NIV) – ¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

²My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

³Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.

⁴In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

⁷All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

⁸“He trusts in the Lord,” they say,
“let the Lord rescue him.

Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.”

⁹Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast.

¹⁰From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.

¹¹Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹²Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

¹³Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.

My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

¹⁷All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

²⁰Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.

²¹Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

²²I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.

²³You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴For he has not despised or scorned

the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.

²⁵From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

²⁶The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the Lord will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,

²⁸for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!

a) Where do you see this presumption of trust in God that is the hallmark of lament?
What reasons does the psalmist give as the basis for this trust?

b) What else stood out to you from Psalm 22?

c) How often do you express yourself to God in the general form of lament?

4. How would you articulate the difference between God's silence due to sin and His silence due to His sovereignty (i.e., having supreme power and authority)?

How can we work to discern which one might be at play in our own experiences?

5. Pastor Adam defined God's sovereign silence as silence filled with purpose for us, even though it is not filled with words. In other words, through His silence, God is forming humility and maturity in us.

a) Was this a new perspective for you on God's silence, or is this something you've experienced in your relationship with God? Explain.

- b) Isaiah chapter 40 reflects a turning point in the book of Isaiah – a turn from prophetic judgement to prophetic hope. As the nation of Israel experiences exile and questions God’s promises to them, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a new future. Read Isaiah 40 together, a portion of which is shared below. What promises does God make for those who wait on Him?

Isaiah 40:27-31 (NIV) – ²⁷Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,
“My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸Do you not know?

Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

³⁰Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

³¹but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

TAKING IT HOME

6. Pastor Adam shared four primary applications for when God seems silent...

1) When God seems silent, don’t return the favor.

Psalm 28:1 (NIV) – To you, Lord, I call;
you are my Rock,
do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you remain silent,
I will be like those who go down to the pit.

2) When God seems silent, don’t listen to the accuser.

James 4:7 (NIV) – Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

3) When God seems silent, restate what He’s already said.

Psalm 119:11-13 (NIV) – ¹¹I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

¹²Praise be to you, Lord;
teach me your decrees.

¹³With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.

4) When God seems silent, listen for His voice from a new source.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) – Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

a) Which of these applications reflect the biggest growth area for you as it relates to navigating God's silence. Explain your answer.

b) If you're presently experiencing God's silence, how can you live out that specific application to your life. Be practical!

7. Group Prayer | Pray for the strength to trust in God's sovereignty even when He seems silent and for maturity to grow through these seasons. Pray for anyone in the group who is currently feeling the silence of God.

Psalm 131 (NIV) – ¹My heart is not proud, Lord,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
²But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
³Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. First Sunday Food Trucks | This summer, don't miss food trucks on the lawn on the first Sunday of the month! Bring your friends and family and join us on the lawn to enjoy community, play games, and purchase food from different local food trucks after service. The fun starts Sunday, June 2nd, and concludes on Sunday, August 4th.
2. Summer Alpha | Alpha is a safe space to explore life's biggest questions and the Christian faith in a friendly, open, and conversational environment. For the Summer, Alpha will meet weekly on Thursday evenings from 6:30pm-8:30pm at Rivers Crossing. Alpha begins on June 6th and concludes August 8th. There will also be a Saturday Alpha experience in late July. Learn more and register below.
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/640444>

3. Serve at Rivers Crossing | We want to keep sharing the Good News about Jesus, but our campus is bursting at the seams. Starting August 4th, we will be adding a fourth service on Sundays at 5pm. But we can't invite people to the 5pm service without a team ready to welcome them! We need people to serve with Production Team, Guest Experiences, and RC Kids now more than ever. This is your chance to create an extraordinary impact! Join a team at <https://riverscrossing.com/serve/>
4. New Community Group Leaders | Interested in leading your own Community Group or have anyone you believe would make a great Community Group leader? If yes, we'd love the opportunity to connect with you or them and share more about our vision for groups at Rivers Crossing. We're always looking to create more space for people to experience and grow in the extraordinary life together!

New Group Leader Interest Form:

<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/414625>