

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide – **When Darkness Comes, Week #1**

March 3, 2019



Engage One Another – Connection

1. “Personal Scavenger Hunt” Exercise: Take approximately five minutes and encourage the members of your group to find items in their purse, wallet, or on their phone that relate to the topics below. Once each group member has had time to search for items, go around the room and have people share about one or two of their items and why they selected them.
 - a. Something that reveals a lot about yourself
 - b. Something that reminds you of a fun experience you had
 - c. Something that concerns or worries you
 - d. Something that you’re proud of

Engage One Another – Introduction

2. What are some of the common stigmas associated with individuals who struggle with mental health? What is it about these stigmas that often creates an unwillingness in people to talk about or seek assistance with their mental health struggles?
3. Pastor Paul shared that we tend to either oversimplify or over-spiritualize struggles with mental health. How does having a healthy balance between these mindsets help us as we care for those experiencing struggles with mental health?

Engage One Another – Diving Deeper

4. If you’re willing, share about your personal connection to mental health. If you have a family member or friend who has or is struggling with mental health, how has this struggle affected you? If you have or are personally dealing with struggles related to mental health, describe what this struggle looks like and how it has affected your life and relationships.

Note to Group Leaders: This question could be an extremely sensitive one for some people. While we want to create an opportunity for people to authentically share about their mental health, we don’t want to pressure anyone into sharing. If someone does share, be intentional to listen to their story and thank them for trusting the group with their experience. I would encourage you to resist what may be an urge to immediately offer solutions and/or next steps for this individual. Your best move as a leader may be to humbly ask that individual if he or she would be willing to be prayed over. If there are situations you believe require care beyond what your group can provide, please let us know as a church staff.

5. Pastor Paul shared three things that we need to understand about darkness – 1) darkness comes from our depravity, 2) darkness can come from our own decisions, and 3) darkness can come from deception.
 - a. How do these teachings relate to your own understanding of and experience with darkness?
 - b. Which of these teachings is most difficult for you to connect with why individuals experience darkness? Share about why you selected the answer you did.
6. Read Ephesians 6:10-12 together. How do we equip ourselves to face darkness when “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but...against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil?”
7. In your experience with darkness, how and where do you view God? Read John 1:4-5 and 1 John 3:8 together. What hope does God offer for those currently struggling with mental health?

Pause & Reflect:

In the Psalms, it's called a "Selah". A moment to catch your breath, rest, and praise. It's an intentional break to reflect and fully experience the moment before moving on. How did God challenge, encourage, correct, etc... as your group engaged one another in this conversation?

Engage God – Time in Prayer

Darkness and struggles with mental health are a reality that a great number of us deal with. Regardless of whether you're a Christian or not, no one is immune to facing times of darkness. Jesus himself told his disciples that they would experience tribulation in this world. But Jesus also told his disciples to take heart, for He has overcome the world (John 16:33). This encouragement and hope that Jesus offered to his disciples is the same encouragement and hope that God offers us today if we are in season of darkness.

As we continue with our When Darkness Comes series, pray that God and His Holy Spirit would do a mighty work and bring about freedom and healing in the lives of a great multitude in our congregation and in the Cincinnati area. Pray for Pastor Paul as he continues to teach on this topic each Sunday morning. And pray that if you're personally struggling with mental health, God would allow His Holy Spirit to provide you with an actionable next step to take in your faith journey.

*"When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! —
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"*

- Horatio Spafford, It Is Well, 1873

Engage One Another + Engage God = *Extraordinary Together*