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# COMMUNITY GROUPS

## RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

May 14, 2023

Ask Me Anything Week #5 / Farrah Taylor

Does The Church Denigrate Women?

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | Share a story about a woman who's made a significant impact on your life. How have you attempted to live out her example?
2. It's the second-to-last week of the Spring Quarter. If this is your final group meeting, use the following questions to reflect, celebrate, and look ahead!
  - a) Reflect on the first five months of 2023. 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) – <sup>10</sup>Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. <sup>11</sup>So 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.

3. Farrah began her sermon by noting that the church at large has a less-than-stellar record of valuing and empowering women. This is especially true when looking back through history. Yet, God has always championed women.

If you're a woman, have you ever felt devalued in your interactions with either the church or other Christian men and women? If you're willing, share about that. On the opposite end, where have you felt empowered and had your dignity affirmed?

If you're a man, what are your observations and/or experiences with how the church treats women? How do you seek to champion women as God does?

## DIVING DEEPER

4. The culture and time period Jesus lived in was a male-dominated world that often excluded women from much of society, including religious activity. Yet the overwhelming testimony of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) is that Jesus elevated women in His preaching and that women were a prominent part of Jesus' life and ministry. As a group, read several stories from the gospel of Luke:

**Luke 13:10-17 (NIV)** – <sup>10</sup>On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup>and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup>When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” <sup>13</sup>Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. <sup>14</sup>Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.” <sup>15</sup>The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? <sup>16</sup>Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” <sup>17</sup>When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

**Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup>He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. <sup>3</sup>And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ <sup>4</sup>“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!’” <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

**Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>[Jesus] saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. <sup>2</sup>He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. <sup>3</sup>“Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. <sup>4</sup>All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

**Luke 8:1-3 (NLT)** – <sup>1</sup>Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, <sup>2</sup>along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; <sup>3</sup>Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

**Luke 24:1-12 (NLT)** – <sup>1</sup>But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>3</sup>So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. <sup>5</sup>The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? <sup>6</sup>He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.” <sup>8</sup>Then they remembered that he had said this. <sup>9</sup>So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. <sup>10</sup>It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. <sup>11</sup>But the story sounded like

nonsense to the men, so they didn't believe it. <sup>12</sup>However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.

a) What stands out to you from these passages? Are there any other stories of Jesus' interactions with women that come to your mind?

b) Women also played a huge role in building the early church (see Romans 16:1-16). During your experience in the church, how have you been impacted by the care and leadership of women and/or examples of women of faith?

5. When God created the first woman - Eve - He declared, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). Farrah shared that the Hebrew word for helper (Ezer) is overwhelmingly applied to God Himself. Read several of those Old Testament passages and discuss the corresponding questions.

**Deuteronomy 33:29 (NIV)** - Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and *helper* and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights."

**Psalm 33:20-22 (NIV)** - <sup>20</sup>We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our *help* and our shield. <sup>21</sup>In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. <sup>22</sup>May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

**Psalm 118:5-7 (NIV)** - <sup>5</sup>When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place. <sup>6</sup>The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? <sup>7</sup>The Lord is with me; he is my *helper*. I look in triumph on my enemies.

**Hosea 13:4-9 (NIV)** - <sup>4</sup>"But I have been the Lord your God ever since you came out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. <sup>5</sup>I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of burning heat. <sup>6</sup>When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me. <sup>7</sup>So I will be like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. <sup>8</sup>Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open; like a lion I will devour them—a wild animal will tear them apart. <sup>9</sup>"You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your *helper*.

a) What stands out to you from these passages about God's actions?

b) Does seeing this word "helper" applied to God affect your view of males and females as equal image bearers of God (Genesis 1:26-27)? If so, explain.

6. Read Ephesians 4:21-28 together. This passage contains one of the most well-known descriptions of marriage in the New Testament.

**Ephesians 4:21-28 (NLT)** - <sup>21</sup>Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their

husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

a) How do you view the Apostle Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5:22-23? Do you believe this picture of Christian marriage is denigrating to women? Explain.

b) What is the husband charged to do in marriage? How can this help us better understand Ephesians 5:22-23?

“Viewed closely, Ephesians 5 is a withering critique of common conceptions of “traditional” gender roles that have often amounted to privileging men and patronizing women. In the drama of marriage, the wife’s needs come first, and the husband’s drive to prioritize himself is cut down with the brutal axe of the gospel. This is no return to Victorian values. Rather, it is a call to pay attention to the character of Christ. If we hear the call to husbands as a mandate to oppress and dominate, we are forgetting that Jesus came not to be served but to serve, not to lead an army but to give his life as a ransom. When husbands are called to loves their wives ‘as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,’ the word translated ‘gave up’ is the same one the Gospels use when Jesus is handed over to be crucified.” – Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*

c) If you're married, how do you live out this passage with your spouse?

If you're single, what does this passage describe marriage as a metaphor pointing to? How can that help direct your life right now?

## TAKING IT HOME

7. How can the church continue and/or improve at being a champion for women?

If you're a woman, where might God be calling you into greater empowerment for the sake of His kingdom? If you're a man, how can you better uplift and encourage the women in your life to do what Jesus asks of them?

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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## RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Alpha at Rivers Crossing | Whether you're skeptical, exploring faith, or wrestling with doubt, Alpha is a safe place for you to bring your questions and connect with others. Our next Alpha class will take place this summer, from June 15th - August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Learn more about Alpha and register for the summer class at the link below:  
<https://riverscrossing.com/alpha/>
2. Preteen Extreme | Who is ready to Race to the Extraordinary this summer at Preteen Extreme? Sign your preteen up now for an experience they'll remember for a lifetime at Preteen Extreme on Saturday, June 17th at Camp Kern. They will conquer an obstacle course, seek out the cross, work together to canoe, aim at archery, grow in community with their small group, and much more! Learn more and register at <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1639769>
3. 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>.