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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

April 7, 2024

Life is Like a Roller Coaster Week #1

The Ups and Downs of Life / Pastor Paul Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | All about roller coasters...
 - Do you enjoy riding roller coasters? Why or why not?
 - Do you have a memorable roller coaster experience? If so, share about it!
 - Have you ever experienced a roller coaster malfunction or an unexpected event while riding? If so, how did you react?
2. What are you looking forward to about being in a Community Group this Spring? If this is your first experience with a group at Rivers Crossing, what led you to join?

3. Life is Like a Roller Coaster | Personal Reflection and Group Sharing

Roller coasters have a variety of structural elements and design features, including hills, drops, twists, turns, loops, tunnels (with darkness), et cetera. Our lives, much like a roller coaster, have these same elements, whether they occur in a specific instance or over a period of time.

Spend extended time reflecting on the trajectory of your life.

- Where have you experienced life's ups and downs, twists and turns, and felt your stomach turn?
- Where was God during those moments? Was He discernable and present during them or only in hindsight?
- How would you describe where you're currently at in life?

To aid with this process, write these moments and reflections down. After your time of reflection, you'll have a chance to share (if you desire to) with your group.

DIVING DEEPER

4. Pastor Paul shared that like the Apostle Peter, our valley doesn't have to define us. Read Psalm 40 together and discuss the corresponding questions.

Psalm 40 (NIV) – ¹I waited patiently for the Lord;

he turned to me and heard my cry.

²He lifted me out of the slimy pit,

out of the mud and mire;

he set my feet on a rock

and gave me a firm place to stand.

³He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.

⁴Blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.

⁵Many, Lord my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.
None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.

⁶Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened—
burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.

⁷Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll.

⁸I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.”

⁹I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, Lord,
as you know.

¹⁰I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.
I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness
from the great assembly.

¹¹Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord;
may your love and faithfulness always protect me.

¹²For troubles without number surround me;
my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails within me.

¹³Be pleased to save me, Lord;
come quickly, Lord, to help me.

¹⁴May all who want to take my life
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who desire my ruin
be turned back in disgrace.

¹⁵May those who say to me, “Aha! Aha!”
be appalled at their own shame.

¹⁶But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who long for your saving help always say,
“The Lord is great!”

¹⁷But as for me, I am poor and needy;
may the Lord think of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
you are my God, do not delay.

a) Like Peter and King David (the author of Psalm 40), in what way(s) have you experienced God pursuing, restoring, and redeeming you through life's valleys? Is there a specific story that has greatly marked your relationship with God?

b) Do any of the words from Psalm 40 particularly resonate with you? If so, why?

5. Read 1 Peter 1:1-9 together. Then discuss the corresponding questions.

1 Peter 1:1-9 (NLT) – ¹One Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In addressing scattered Christian believers (verse 1) who are in all likelihood dealing with grief and sorrow, Peter recognized that life, even as a Christians, has its ups and downs. His encouragement for Christians to “stay on the roller coaster ride of life” (to borrow from our sermon series language) is to look back and look ahead. Back to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross (verse 3) and ahead to Christ’s second coming and our eternal inheritance (verses 4-5).

a) How can Peter’s call to look back and look forward help us navigate the reality of the Christian life in a broken world?

b) According to Peter, how does God use the trials and suffering of our life?

TAKING IT HOME

6. What’s your biggest takeaway from this week’s sermon and our group discussion? How can you put that into action this week?

7. Prayer Prompt | How can your Community Group pray for you and your family?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary | Join us for a night of worship and prophetic ministry on Sunday, April 28th at 6pm at our Rivers Crossing Mason campus. When Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary is an incredible way to experience God's power firsthand in a tangible way through extended worship, ministry time, and corporate prayer. Come expectantly and join us as we seek the extraordinary life together.
2. Men's Night | We're hosting a FREE Men's Event on Sunday May 5th! We'll start at 5pm with a message from our Lead Pastor Paul Taylor. Then we'll have an extended and unhurried time of food (City BBQ), fun (outdoor games, fire pits, etc.), and fellowship as we enjoy our renovated outdoor lawn and lobby spaces! You're not going to want to miss Men's Night and you're going to want to invite a friend!
If you're planning to join us, please let us know by registering. Thanks!
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2212814>
3. Baptisms - Saturday May 18th | 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! This baptism service will be held on our renovated lawn space at 3pm. Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/grow/>



COMMUNITY GROUPS

MISSION AND VISION

Groups Mission:

To provide people an opportunity to experience loving community as they pursue being a fully engaged follower of Christ.

Community Groups Vision:

To gather together regularly to share, study the Bible, and support one another. Community Groups are sermon-based, meaning they study a set of Bible passages and questions connected to the previous weekend's sermon.

Healthy Community Groups:

Community Groups are designed so that we can love and care for one another and put God's Word into action – all in pursuit of experiencing and living the extraordinary life. As you lead, keep the following in mind for evaluating the health of your group:

- **ENGAGE:** Groups are only successful when people invest their time and energy to genuinely engage the process by attending regularly, being honest, and developing relationship with other group members. This takes time, but it's worth it. | *Acts 2:42-27, Colossians 3:12-17*
- **ENCOURAGE:** One of the primary roles your group will play is in encouraging one another forward in your individual walks with Christ. This includes supporting one another through the messiness and trials of life.
 - *Hebrews 10: 23-25*
- **EQUIP:** Regularly encountering God's Word through the sermon, group discussion, and personal study will, over time, equip each group member to be a more fully engaged follower of Jesus. As this information permeates the heart, the Holy Spirit will provide application and personal growth.
 - *2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 14:25-26*
- **EMPOWER:** As your group meets, you will see some people naturally begin to exhibit spiritual gifts including leadership, shepherding, and hospitality. Be on the lookout for these developments. Empower these individuals to step into larger roles within the group, to consider leading or hosting their own group, or to serve where led. | *Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 3:10-14*
- **EXPAND:** As each member of your group begins to invest in their "8 to 15," it's natural for your group to add new members and to connect others into groups ministry. | *John 13:34-35*