

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide – Don't Drink The Poison Week #4

Pull It Up By The Root / February 28, 2021 / Pastor Paul Taylor



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | Would You Rather...
 - Lose your keys or your cell phone?
 - Go without coffee or soda for the rest of your life?
 - Be known as a one-hit wonder for a novel or a song?
 - Hear the good news or bad news first?
2. Now that we've finished our Don't Drink the Poison sermon series, what advice would you offer to a friend or loved one who shares that they are struggling with an offense?
3. Read Matthew 15:10-11,15-19. Pastor Paul shared that the poison of offense corrupts our heart and turns into bitterness. Instead of overlooking or forgiving an offense, we may try to suppress an offense or deny feeling offended at all. But, as Jesus said, our words will reveal the true condition of our heart.

Can you think of a time you said something that "shocked yourself" and made you aware that you were actually more offended by an incident or person than you initially realized?

Matthew 15:10-11,15-19 (NLT) – ¹⁰Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. "Listen," he said, "and try to understand. ¹¹It's not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth..." ¹⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, "Explain to us the parable that says people aren't defiled by what they eat." ¹⁶"Don't you understand yet?" Jesus asked. ¹⁷"Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. ¹⁸But the words you speak come from the heart—that's what defiles you.¹⁹For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander.

DIVING DEEPER

4. Bitterness can be defined as anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly. It's the dwelling on of an offense to the point where it leaves you – but not the other person – in bondage.
 - a) Can you relate to letting an offense take root in your heart to where it negatively affected both you and others? If you're willing, share about this. How did you pull out the root of this bitterness?

Hebrews 12:14-15 (PHILLIPS) – ¹⁴⁻¹⁵Let it be your ambition to live at peace with all men and to achieve holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord". Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others.

b) Read Romans 12:19-21. Remarking on this passage, Pastor John Piper says, “This promise says if one of the things holding you back from letting it [an offense] go is, ‘It’s wrong. Justice hasn’t been done... God will lift from you the suicidal load of vengeance and carry it to one of two places. He will carry it to the cross if the person repents, or he will carry it to hell where they will be forever. And you can’t improve upon either of those. If they’re in hell, you don’t need to add to their punishment. If their load was borne and forgiven and paid at the cross, you would dishonor the Lord if you didn’t share in the forgiveness.” Source – <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-word-of-god-is-at-work-in-you/excerpts/how-to-battle-bitterness>

How do you feel about these comments and the perspective they shed on overcoming offenses?

Romans 12:19-21 (ESV) – ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

5. While many offenses that turn into bitterness have a legitimate source, others can be manufactured by ourselves when we play the “comparison game.” As we compare ourselves against others we either know or perceive to have better careers, happier families, deeper friendships, more wealth, wider influence, et cetera, we can quickly develop discontentment.

a) Have you noticed this struggle in your own life? If so, explain.

b) Read 2 Corinthians 10:9-18. What is the Apostle Paul’s take on playing this comparison game?

2 Corinthians 10:9-18 (NLT) – ¹⁰For some say, “Paul’s letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!” ¹¹Those people should realize that our actions when we arrive in person will be as forceful as what we say in our letters from far away. ¹²Oh, don’t worry; we wouldn’t dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant! ¹³We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you. ¹⁴We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.

¹⁵Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended. ¹⁶Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else’s territory. ¹⁷As the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.” ¹⁸When people commend themselves, it doesn’t count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.

TAKING IT HOME

6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17 and Romans 8:28. Jesus taught his followers that offense is certain to happen (Luke 17:1) and that we'll experience trouble while on earth (John 16:33). As we grapple with offenses – be it hurt done against us, slander, injustice, malice, and so on – we face a choice. Do we really believe that God has a purpose for and uses these offenses for our good?
- a) Do you have a story of how God has used an offense – whether big or small – for your good and/or to grow you into the follower of Jesus you are today?
- b) If you're currently dealing with an offense, how might this promise of God affect the way you respond to said offense?

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NLT) – For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Romans 8:28 (NLT) – And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

7. Prayer Exercise | Cherishing Our Forgiveness from God

The more we cherish the forgiveness we've freely received from God through Jesus Christ, the more we'll pursue pouring out the poison of offense as part of living an extraordinary life. As you close your time in group, read Psalm 103:1-18 and Ephesians 1:3-8a together. Then spend time in prayer, reflecting on and expressing gratitude for the impact of God's forgiveness in your life.

Psalm 103:1-18 (NLT) – ¹Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. ²Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. ³He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. ⁴He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. ⁵He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! ⁶The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. ⁷He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. ⁸The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. ⁹He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. ¹⁰He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. ¹¹For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. ¹²He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. ¹³The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. ¹⁴For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust. ¹⁵Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. ¹⁶The wind blows, and we are gone—as though we had never been here. ¹⁷But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children ¹⁸of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments!

Ephesians 1:3-8a (NIV) – ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸that he lavished on us.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. Care Team | The Care Team is designed to help the hurting through personal interaction and prayer. We encourage anyone dealing with major health issues, divorce, grief, financial crisis or any other difficulty to reach out by completing the Care Request Form. Someone will contact you within 48 hours. Each situation is handled individually and confidentially. Learn more by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/care-team/>.
2. Volunteer Opportunities | What we do as a church wouldn’t be possible without our incredible volunteer teams. If you’re looking to serve, get started by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/get-involved/>. If you’re unsure where to start, there’s a great serving assessment at the top of that webpage.

If you’re watching exclusively online and want to volunteer, consider joining our Online Host Team. If you think about our online ministry like our physical buildings, Hosts are like our welcome, next steps, and prayer teams—all in one. Reach out at <https://riverscrossing.wufoo.com/forms/q1wout2k1cx5poi/>.
3. Baby Dedication – Saturday March 20th | If you have a child 2 years old or younger, we’d love for you to participate in Baby Dedication! This experience will teach you how to lead your child in their faith, show you ways that Rivers Crossing will partner with you on this journey, and give you the opportunity to publicly dedicate your child. Learn more and register at <https://riverscrossing.com/baby-dedication/>.
4. Growth Track – Now Online | Looking to experience the extraordinary life found in Jesus? We’ve moved our Growth Track classes online so you can engage with them on your own schedule. Learn more and take the classes by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/growth-track/>.