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# COMMUNITY GROUPS

**RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH**

Community Group Discussion Guide

November 26, 2023

Foundations of Faith Week #8 / Pastor Josh Pocock

The Power of Prayer

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Share a meaningful experience of giving or receiving during the Christmas season. Are there any charitable activities or causes you're passionate about supporting during this time?

Note - On December 17th, Rivers Crossing will come together for the Christmas Offering. Every penny that you give to the Christmas Offering will go toward our local and global missions. Your generosity will plant new churches, serve our city, and fund Joshua's Place, our ministry that works to break the cycle of generational poverty in our community. Learn more at <https://riverscrossing.com/christmasoffering>

2. What's something you're earnestly praying for? How long have you prayed for this?
3. How would you evaluate the quality of your prayer life?

What do you find most engaging and/or beneficial about praying to God? What do you struggle with the most concerning prayer?

## DIVING DEEPER

4. Read James 5:13-16 together. Then discussing the corresponding questions.

**James 5:13-16 (HCSB)** - <sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him after anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will restore him to health; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

- a) For anyone suffering, James' advice is to pray. Think back to James 1:2-5. How can praying during a time of suffering help us not only persevere, but experience joy?

**James 1:2-5 (HCSB)** - <sup>2</sup>Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. <sup>5</sup>Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.

- b) Sandwiched between instructions to those suffering (vs. 13) and those who are sick (vs. 14), James tells anyone who is cheerful to sing praises. What do you make of this specific instruction and how it fits into James' thought process?

Read Psalm 34:1-5. How might these verses help us understand James better?

**Psalm 34:1-5 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. <sup>2</sup>I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. <sup>3</sup>Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together. <sup>4</sup>I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup>Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.

c) How do you interpret James 5:15? What are we to do when we've prayed for healing but haven't seen that prayer answered here on earth?

5. Read James 5:16-18 together. Then discussing the corresponding questions.

**James 5:16-18 (HCSB)** – <sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

a) As Pastor Josh taught, James cites Elijah and his experiences in 1 Kings 17-18 to encourage his readers to pray with boldness. Is boldness a word you'd use to describe your prayers? Explain your answer.

b) How can you begin or continue cultivating a bolder prayer life?

6. Read James 5:19-20 together. James concludes his letter with a powerful admonition to help those who are straying from the truth of God's Word (see James 1:18) and not living with genuine faith.

**James 5:19-20 (HCSB)** – <sup>19</sup>My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, <sup>20</sup>let him know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins.

a) Read Galatians 6:1-10. What stands out to you from this passage?

**Galatians 6:1-10 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup>Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup>for each one should carry their own load. <sup>6</sup>Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. <sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup>Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers

- b) What experience do you have with the words contained in James 5:19-20 and Galatians 6:1-10? This could be on either side – the person helping or the person straying from the truth who needs turned back. If you’re willing, explain.
- c) Is there someone in your life who you could apply these passages to? What can you begin doing to help this person?

## TAKING IT HOME

7. While James commends receiving prayer from church elders, he also encourages all believers to pray for one another and confess their sins to one another (James 5:16). Take a few minutes to reflect on your life and pursuit of righteousness. In the midst of people who love and support you, is there anything you need to ask for prayer for and/or confess? If yes, humbly and boldly do so!

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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## RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Serve at Rivers Crossing | One of the marks of a fully engaged follower is their willingness to invest into God’s kingdom with their time, talents, and resources. We have opportunities to serve all throughout the week! Find the team that’s the right fit for you and partner with us to create an environment for people to become fully engaged followers of Jesus. Learn more at <https://riverscrossing.com/serve-here/>
2. Christmas Eve at Rivers Crossing | Experience the joy of Christmas! Between bright carols, twinkling lights, and falling snow, your kids will love our candlelight service. Most importantly, you’ll leave with heartwarming memories and hope for the future.

Mason Service Times	Deer Park Service Times
Friday 12/22 - 7pm	
Saturday 12/23 - 1pm and 3pm	
Sunday 12/24 - 8:45am, 10:15am, 12pm and 11pm*	Sunday 12/24 - 10am

For Christmas Eve, RC Kids programming is provided for kids in Preschool and younger. Kids in Kindergarten and older are invited to attend our services.  
*\*There is no RC Kids programing for the 11pm service at Mason on 12/24.*