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# COMMUNITY GROUPS

## RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

October 22, 2023

Foundations of Faith Week #3 / Pastor Paul Taylor

The Word Can Change Your Life

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | If you were going on a spiritual retreat, what three things (other than your Bible) would you take and why?
2. This week's passage from James (James 1:18-27) focuses on our engagement with the "word of truth" (vs. 18) – the Bible.
  - a) How would you summarize your beliefs about the Bible? Do you see it as God's inspired and authoritative word or something else? Explain your answer.
  
  - b) What does your level of engagement with the Bible look like? How often do you read the Bible? If you read it, do you follow a plan, journal, meditate, memorize verses, study with aids like a Bible dictionary or commentary, et cetera?
3. Read James 1:18 together. In what way(s) was God's word connected with your decision to first believe in Jesus Christ? Was there a particular verse or passage that God used to awaken your faith?

James 1:18 (NIV) – He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

## DIVING DEEPER

4. Read James 1:18-27 together and discuss the corresponding questions.

James 1:18-27 (NIV) – <sup>18</sup>He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. <sup>19</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup>because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. <sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. <sup>26</sup>Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

- a) We all have a choice – often a daily choice – as to whether we're going to allow God's word to be the anchor of our soul/driving force of our life or the world.  
Where in your life have you done well at holding fast to and obeying God's word? Where do you sense you're still "gripped" by what the world offers? Explain.

- b) Pastor Paul shared that we have to humble ourselves when God's word confronts us. Can you think of a scenario(s) where the Bible confronted your beliefs and/or behaviors? If so, how did you respond and what was the result?
- c) Is there a particular teaching(s) in the Bible that you're currently being confronted with but unwilling to submit to? If you're willing, share about that.

5. James powerfully articulates that for God's word to truly transform us, we have to actually do what it says, not merely understand what it says. His words might remind you of those spoken by his brother Jesus...

Matthew 7:24-29 (NIV) - <sup>24</sup>"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup>But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." <sup>28</sup>When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup>because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

- a) Can you relate to knowing God's word but not living it out? If so, explain.

Did you connect at all with the analogy Pastor Paul shared of using God's word as binoculars to judge others and lift ourselves up?

- b) Is there an area of your life where, in earnestly committing to obey God's word, you've experienced blessing from God (James 1:25)? If so, explain.

## 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. **Reflection and Group Prayer** | Psalm 119:1-24

Read Psalm 119:1-24 together before reflecting in silence for a few minutes. After that personal time of reflection, discuss the following questions and spend time in prayer.

What do you sense God speaking to you through these verses?

How can your group pray for you regarding either knowing and submitting yourself to God's word or something else?

**Psalm 119:1-14 (NIV)** – <sup>1</sup>Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. <sup>2</sup>Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—<sup>3</sup>they do no wrong but follow his ways. <sup>4</sup>You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. <sup>5</sup>Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! <sup>6</sup>Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. <sup>7</sup>I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. <sup>8</sup>I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

<sup>9</sup>How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. <sup>10</sup>I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. <sup>11</sup>I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. <sup>12</sup>Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees. <sup>13</sup>With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. <sup>14</sup>I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. <sup>15</sup>I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. <sup>16</sup>I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

<sup>17</sup>Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word. <sup>18</sup>Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. <sup>19</sup>I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. <sup>20</sup>My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. <sup>21</sup>You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed, those who stray from your commands.

<sup>22</sup>Remove from me their scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes. <sup>23</sup>Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees. <sup>24</sup>Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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## RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. 2024 Discipleship School | Discipleship School is a one-year program that helps Christians from all backgrounds become fully engaged followers of Christ. The school helps students learn to hear God's voice clearly, experience a full and free life, develop intimacy with God, develop Christlike living, and understand their spiritual gifting. For more information, or to apply for the Discipleship School, click on the link: <https://riverscrossing.com/discipleship-school/>
2. 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/>