

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH



Community Group Discussion Guide – Don't Drink The Poison Week #2

The Expectation Gap / February 14, 2021 / Pastor Paul Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Valentine's Day Edition

- a) It's Valentine's week, meaning candy aisles everywhere are stocked with candy hearts. Remember those? Little sugary hearts with phrases like "Be Mine", "Love You", "Hug Me", and "Be True." If you had to design your own candy heart, what would it say?
- b) This or That? Circle or underline your answers. (*Note: This question is more for the women of the group. But men, you can take notes and share your preferences too if you wish.*)
- Chocolate or Flowers
 - Fancy Restaurant or Homemade Meal
 - Funny Card or Sentimental Card
 - Homemade Gift or Purchased Gift

2. Prayerfully consider and work through the following personal evaluations for living offended. As Pastor Paul said, there is a high percentage chance that many of us are living offended in some area of our life.

a) Which, if any, of these "warning signs" for living offended do you connect with?

- Being overly critical
- Being overly sensitive
- Having a history of bad or broken relationships
- Struggling to find consistency in your life
- Always seeing other people as the problem

b) Which, if any, of the following people or groups do you frequently experience offense from?

- Your spouse
- Your family (immediate)
- Your family (extended)
- Authority figures
- Your employer or employees
- People with greater wealth
- The church
- People of a different race
- People with different political ideas
- Strangers on social media
- Other _____

c) Is it easier for you to discern when someone else is living offended, or when you yourself are living offended? Explain your answer.

Psalm 139:1-4,23-24 (NIV) – ¹You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely...²³Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (NIV) – "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read Matthew 11:2-6. John the Baptist's unfulfilled expectations – specifically his vision of Jesus as the Messiah and God's plan for instituting His kingdom through blessing and judgment – led him to a place

of sincere doubt. And John's doubt was likely confounded because he had been faithful in serving God and preparing the way for Jesus. Discuss the following questions.

Matthew 11:2-6 (ESV) – ²Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

- a) Like John the Baptist, some of our deepest unfulfilled expectations can lead us to doubt and question God. Perhaps we doubt God's character or the timing of His plans for our life. Have you had a time in your life like this? If you're willing, share about that experience. How did you handle it?

- b) Read Psalm 77:1-15 together. Verses 11-15 provide a prescription for overcoming doubt. What do they say? If you were to walk through a season of doubting God, what deeds that God has done would you go back to for remembrance?

Psalm 77:1-15 (NIV) – ¹I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. ²When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted. ³I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. ⁴You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. ⁵I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; ⁶I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked: ⁷“Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? ⁸Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? ⁹Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” ¹⁰Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. ¹¹I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. ¹²I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.” ¹³Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? ¹⁴You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. ¹⁵With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

4. Managing unfulfilled expectations – whether they are unspoken, unmet, or unrealistic – requires a better solution than simply going through life without any expectations. Read and study the following Bible passages together. What principles do you see in these passages that can help us as we form expectations and deal with the expectations of others?

James 3:2 (NLT) – Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

Proverbs 18:13 (NLT) – Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.

Colossians 4:6 (NLT) – Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

James 1:19 (NLT) – Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT) – ⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT) – ²¹Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” ²²“No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!

Ephesians 4:32 (NLT) – Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT) – ⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Romans 8:28, 35-39 (NLT) – ²⁸And 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... ³⁵Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶(As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) ³⁷No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. ³⁸And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Any other Biblical passages or stories come to mind that can aid us in dealing with expectations?

5. As Pastor Paul taught us this week, there is an important difference between forgiveness and trust. Biblical forgiveness isn’t pretending something never happened, immediately starting to trust again, immediately removing all consequences or letting someone continue to hurt us over and over again. Rather, forgiveness is about refusing to seek revenge, giving others what God gave us (grace and mercy), and not allowing ourselves to be consumed by the past.

a) Which part of this definition of what forgiveness both is and isn’t do you struggle with the most?

b) What hurdles have you had to deal with in forgiving someone?

“Forgiveness means that you no longer regard the offending person as indebted to you.” – Tim Sledge

TAKING IT HOME

6. How can you apply this week’s sermon? Or to be more specific, *with whom*, do you need to apply it?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. 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/>.
2. 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/>.
3. 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/>.