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# COMMUNITY GROUPS

**RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH**

Community Group Discussion Guide

February 4, 2024

God Breathed Week #2 / Pastor Paul Taylor

Understanding The Bible

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | What's a book you've already read, but would love to have the experience of reading over again for the first time? Do you prefer physical books, e-books (ex: Kindle), or audio books?

2. Rivers Crossing 21 Day Fast | Discussion Questions

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, Rivers Crossing finished our annual churchwide time of fasting and prayer. Use the following questions to reflect on the fast as a Community Group.

- How was your experience with the 21 Day Fast? Did you have any significant takeaways, breakthroughs, or moments with God?
- How did fasting impact your times of prayer with God?
- Is fasting a discipline you could see yourself using at another time other than the 21 Day Fast? Explain your answer.

3. How would you rate your overall understanding of the Bible? What aspects of the Bible do you have the most confidence with? What about the least confidence with?

Grouping of the Books of the Bible:

Category	Law (5)	History (12)	Poetry/Wisdom (5)	Prophecy (17)
OT Book(s)	Genesis - Deuteronomy	Joshua - Esther	Job - Song of Solomon	5 Major (Isaiah - Daniel) 12 Minor (Hosea - Malachi)
Category	Gospels (4)	History (1)	Epistles (21)	Apocalyptic (1)
NT Book(s)	Matthew - John	Acts	Romans - Jude	Revelation

What are some of your favorite resources for better understanding the Bible?

Rivers Crossing Bible Resources | <https://riverscrossing.com/resources>

## DIVING DEEPER

4. Because the Bible wasn't written in English (or other modern-day languages), the original text has to be translated for most of us to receive it. Every translation is an act of interpretation as language (words, figures of speech, etc.) and culture change over time. Below is an overview of the different Bible translation philosophies.<sup>1</sup>

1. Material adapted from *How to Read the Bible For All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart

1) Formal Equivalence (word-for-word) - The translators work to stay as close as possible to the words and grammar of the original Hebrew and Greek.

- Examples: KJV/NKJV, NASB, ESV

2) Functional/Dynamic Equivalence (thought-for-thought) - The translators work to keep the original meaning of the Hebrew and Greek, but put their words and idioms into comparable and more natural English.

- Examples: NIV, NLT

3) Free Translation (paraphrase) – The translators work to capture the same ideas from one language to another, but with less emphasis on using the exact words of the original languages. This is an attempt to remove as much of the historical distance between languages as possible.

- Examples: Living Bible, The Message

a) Do you have a preferred Bible translation? How should we approach those who utilize a different translation than our preferred translation?

b) How might the task you're doing with the Bible (ex: preaching vs. personal devotions) impact the Bible translation(s) you consult?

5. When explaining the Bible, Pastor Paul presented a set of comparisons between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Review those comparisons below before discussing the corresponding questions.

The Old Testament tells the story about a people.

The New Testament tells the story about a Person.

The Old Testament centers around Abraham and Moses.

The New Testament centers around Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament gathers around Mount Sinai.

The New Testament gathers around the Cross.

The Old Testament shows the wrath of God against sin.

The New Testament shows the grace of God against sinners.

The Old Testament writes the law on tablets.

The New Testament writes the law on our hearts.

What about these comparisons do you find helpful? Are there aspects of these comparisons that are confusing and/or you disagree with? If so, explain.

6. Pastor Paul shared that to truly understand the Bible, we should look for Jesus on every page. That means looking for Jesus in not just the New Testament, but the Old Testament as well. Consider this amazing story from the life of Jesus...

**Luke 24:13-35 (NIV)** – <sup>13</sup>Now that same day [that Jesus resurrected] two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup>As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup>but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup>He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup>One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>"What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup>but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup>In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup>but didn't find his body. They came and

told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup>As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

<sup>33</sup>They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup>and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” <sup>35</sup>Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

What do you make of this instruction to see Jesus on every page of the Bible? How can we think about seeing Jesus in the Old Testament?

“The Bible—not only the Gospels but all of Scripture—is the (divinely) authorized version of the gospel, the necessary framework for understanding what God was doing in Jesus Christ. Scripture is the voice of God that articulates the Word of God: Jesus Christ.”  
- Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*

## TAKING IT HOME

7. In his study *Clarifying the Bible*, Pastor Mitch Maher shares six aspects of engaging the Bible that allow us to “get a firm grip” on understanding the Bible. Those aspects are hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and applying God’s Word.

Is there a particular aspect of engaging the Bible that you want to grow in? If so, share about why and what that would look like in your daily life.

### **Clarifying the Bible Workshop | Saturday February 24th, 9am - 12pm**

Interested in diving deeper into God’s Word, but not sure where to start? Through the Clarifying the Bible workshop, you’ll learn the basic framework and storyline of the Bible in just one morning! We’ll gather at the Mason campus on Saturday, February 24th from 9am-12pm to watch the video course together over coffee. Register using this link: <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2150206>

8. 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. Unity Night | Join us for Unity Night of worship, where churches across Cincinnati will come together to worship Jesus together. We'll be gathering at Vineyard Cincinnati Church on February 4th at 6pm. We can't wait to worship with you!  
Vineyard Cincinnati Address | 11340 Century Cir E, Springdale, OH 45246
2. Baptisms - Sunday February 11th | 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!  
Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/grow>
3. Baby Dedication | Have you welcomed a new baby to your family over the last year? Congratulations! We're excited to celebrate your child at Baby Dedication on March 9th. The Baby Dedication 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 dedicate your child. Learn more and register below.  
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1978441>
4. 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/>