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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

April 30, 2023

Ask Me Anything Week #3 / Pastor Paul Taylor

What Does God Say About The LGBTQ+ Community?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | What's one thing you've always wanted to learn but haven't had the time or opportunity to do so?
2. This week's Ask Me Anything question is What Does God Say About The LGBTQ+ Community? Was there anything in Pastor Paul's sermon that you heard for the first time or that challenged or confused you?

Prior to Sunday's sermon, did any of the following statements describe your beliefs and/or experience with the LGBTQ+ community? If you're willing, explain.

- Your mind is made up, regardless of what is spoken or what the Bible says.
 - You're "on the fence" - perhaps caught between the Bible and not wanting to anyone someone you know or uncertain of what the Bible teaches on this issue.
 - Your stance toward the LGBTQ+ community is marked more by intolerance and even hate than compassionate Christian conviction.
 - You have been personally hurt, ostracized, or cast out over this issue.
3. Do you have any personal connection to and/or relationships with those who identify with the LGBTQ+ community? If you're willing, share about those.

DIVING DEEPER

4. When talking about God and the LGBTQ+ community, the cultural narrative often says there are only two options - affirming or non-affirming. Pastor Paul urged us to consider another option - the way of Jesus. Jesus not only fulfilled the law, but often called His followers to higher standards, including with sexual ethics. Yet, Jesus also surrounded Himself with those whom the religious leaders of His day scoffed at - tax collectors, prostitutes, and adulterers.

John 1:14 (NIV) - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Matthew 11:16-19 (NIV) - ¹⁶"To what can I [Jesus] compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: ¹⁷"We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

- a) What can we learn from Jesus' ministry and the company He kept as it relates to pursuing grace and truth with the LGBTQ+ community?
- b) Think back to the relationships you identified in Question #3. Are you keeping these people "at arm's length" or are you welcoming them into your life?

“If the church is ever going to solve this issue, it needs to stop seeing it as an “issue.” Homosexuality is not an issue to be solved; it’s about people who need to love and be loved.” - Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*

5. Pastor Paul spent a significant portion of his sermon engaging with the question – Does God say homosexuality is wrong? Read the following Bible passages before discussing the corresponding questions together.

Leviticus 20:13 (NLT) – If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (HCSB) – ⁹Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, ¹⁰no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God’s kingdom. ¹¹And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Romans 1:21-27 (NLT) – ²¹Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²²Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other’s bodies. ²⁵They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

Matthew 19:1-6 (NIV) – ¹When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” ⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

- a) What do you believe God says about homosexuality and gender? Did anything from Pastor Paul’s sermon stand out to you on these questions?
- b) Is the call to surrender one’s sexual desires and preferences something that only extends to those in the LGBTQ+ community, or is it placed upon everyone who chooses to follow Jesus? Explain your answer.
- c) The Bible’s clear boundaries around sex have led many to develop unloving, superior, and judgmental attitudes toward gay and lesbian couples. Do you believe these attitudes reflect the heart of Jesus and the gospel?

TAKING IT HOME

6. On the heels of His encounter with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-25), Jesus has a remarkable exchange with His disciples. Read that conversation and then discuss the corresponding questions together.

Mark 10:26-31 (NIV) – ²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible but not with God; all things are possible with God.” ²⁸Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” ²⁹“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

a) While acknowledging that it's costly to follow Him (see also Matthew 16:24), Jesus also promises something to those who follow Him. What's this promise?

b) What does it look like for you and the church to provide loving community for someone who identifies with the LGBTQ+ community?

7. What's your biggest takeaway from this week's sermon and group discussion? How can you put that into practice in the near future?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Alpha at Rivers Crossing | Whether you're skeptical, exploring faith, or wrestling with doubt, Alpha is a safe place for you to bring your questions and connect with others. Our next Alpha class will take place this summer, from June 15th – August 3rd. Learn more about Alpha and register for the summer class at the link below:
<https://riverscrossing.com/alpha/>

2. Preteen Extreme | Who is ready to Race to the Extraordinary this summer at Preteen Extreme? Sign your preteen up now for an experience they'll remember for a lifetime at Preteen Extreme on Saturday, June 17th at Camp Kern. They will conquer an obstacle course, seek out the cross, work together to canoe, aim at archery, grow in community with their small group, and much more! Learn more and register at <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1639769>

3. New Community Group Leaders | Interested in leading your own Community Group or have anyone you believe would make a great Community Group leader? If yes, we'd love the opportunity to connect with you or them and share more about our vision for groups at Rivers Crossing. We're always looking to create more space for people to experience and grow in the extraordinary life together!

New Group Leader Interest Form:

<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/414625>.

4. 2023 RC Students Summer Camp | Next summer (June 19-24, 2023), RC Students is going to Eagle Sky of the Ozarks for camp! We truly believe that Summer Camp is one of the best ways for your Junior High or High School student to get connected in RC Students. They'll build lasting bonds with other students and their leaders that will continue throughout the year. Most importantly, your student will have a week to focus on connecting with Jesus in a new way. Learn more and register below: <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1450605>