

# RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide – **When Darkness Comes, Week #4**

March 24, 2019



## Engage One Another – Connection

1. “Two Truths and a Lie” Exercise: Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one statement that is a lie. The rest of the group members then attempt to determine which of the person’s three statements is the lie. Encourage people to keep their statements brief.

## Engage One Another – Introduction

*Note for group leaders and participants – As we conclude When Darkness Comes, suicide is not a topic which lands on us lightly. This is especially true for those of us who are still grieving for loved ones or who may have struggled with suicidal thoughts ourselves. The subject of suicide should be approached sensitively and compassionately. Flippant religious platitudes and stern theological responses often don’t serve us well and they certainly don’t serve those who don’t have the hope of the gospel of Jesus.*

2. A large component of Sunday’s worship service focused on the testimony of former Marine Corps RECON member Chris Campbell. Spend time as a group reflecting on the following questions:
  - a. What stood out most vividly to you about Chris’ testimony?
  - b. Which emotions and/or or experiences that Chris shared could you relate with?
  - c. What, if any, personal connection do you have with suicide?

## Engage One Another – Diving Deeper

3. In an earlier sermon series at Rivers Crossing, Pastor Paul taught that suicide is a sin (see Exodus 20:13) and deeply grieves God, but that for a truly repentant and believing Christian, suicide does not result in a loss of salvation (see Romans 8:39). How does this Biblical explanation of suicide either challenge or line up with your own understanding of suicide?
4. During the Mental Health Forum, Dr. Brett Dowdy, who serves as the Chief of Psychological Services at the Lindner Center of HOPE, shared that talking about suicide actually decreases the risk of suicide.
  - a. How does Brett’s revelation compare with your perception of talking about suicide and/or your personal experience dealing with suicidal thoughts?
  - b. If someone confides in you that they are having suicidal thoughts, what are some appropriate questions you could ask? How would you determine the next step to take with this individual?
  - c. When addressing suicide, how can your words and actions reflect an appropriate balance between providing compassionate care and communicating biblical truth?
5. Read Romans 8:34-39 and 1 Peter 1:3-9 together. What do these passages communicate about the hope and good news found in Jesus Christ? How could these passages be helpful for someone dealing with the loss of a family member or friend due to suicide?
6. As you reflect on the When Darkness Comes series, what next steps do you need to commit to and receive accountability for regarding your mental health? How can the group support you in this process?

### → Pause & Reflect:

In the Psalms, it’s called a “Selah”. A moment to catch your breath, rest, and praise. It’s an intentional break to reflect and fully experience the moment before moving on. How did God challenge, encourage, correct, etc... as your group engaged one another in this conversation?

## Engage God – Time in Prayer

Read the following passage of Scripture together. If your group is willing, have everyone close their eyes, while one person reads the passage slowly and evenly. This particular Psalm was written by David, whom we learned last week battled with severe depression during periods of his life. Despite David's intense mental health struggles, he continued to rejoice in, rest in, and ultimately place his faith in God. Encourage your group to receive what these words have to communicate about the character and nature of God and the depth of His love toward us. After processing through these verses, continue to pray for one another and any next steps that have been committed too during the When Darkness Comes series.

*You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.  
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.  
Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.  
You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.  
**If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"  
even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.***

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!  
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand – when I awake, I am still with you.*

**Psalm 139: 1-18 (NIV)**

Engage One Another + Engage God = *Extraordinary Together*

### Additional Resources

1. Rivers Crossing Sermon [4/10/2016]: You Asked For It - What Does the Church Believe About Suicide?  
<https://subsplash.com/riverscrossing/lb/mi/+5c0850b> / Pastor Paul Taylor
2. Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF) – <https://www.ccef.org/topic/suicide/>
3. Book Recommendation – *A Long-Shadowed Grief: Suicide and Its Aftermath* by Harold Ivan Smith
4. *Hope Bridge* Movie – <http://www.hopebridgemovie.com>