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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

September 24, 2023

Stuck Together Week #3 / Pastor Josh Pocock

How To Really Love Your Child

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Tell Us More About Yourself...
 - Finish this sentence: "I know it's fall when..."
 - It's time to build your own pizza! What are your favorite toppings?
 - What was the highlight of your summer?
2. Icebreaker Question | Share a favorite memory you have as a family or with one of your children. Why did this particular moment stand out to you?
3. Looking back on Pastor Josh Pocock's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
If it helps, recall that Pastor Josh preached that we can really love our children by giving them love, time, grace, space, attention, discipline, and Jesus.

DIVING DEEPER

4. Pastor Josh preached that it's our responsibility to give our children love so that they can reflect love back to others. The question we have to address then is the kind of love we're offering our children. Is it love that's conditional or unconditional?

Read the following Bible passages and discuss the corresponding questions.

Ephesians 2:1-10 (NIV) – ¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1 John 4:7-12 (NIV) – ⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

- a) Based on these passages, how would you describe the type of love God has for us? How have you experienced that in your relationship with Him?

b) How would you describe the type of love you offer your children? Where do you find it hardest to remove conditions from the love you offer?

c) While God's love for us is ultimately unconditional, the Bible also makes clear that we're called to a standard of living – pursuing holiness – as followers of Christ.

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NIV) – ¹³Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

How do you believe we can balance offering unconditional love *and* establishing intentional boundaries and expectations designed to grow and mature our kids?

5. When it comes to parenting, the topic of disciplining is one of the most challenging and controversial. For most, it's not a matter of *should we* discipline, but *how*. Read the following Scriptures and discuss the corresponding questions.

Exodus 34:4-7 (NIV) – ⁴So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. ⁵Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. ⁶And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Hebrews 12:4-11 (NIV) – ⁴In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” ⁷Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

a) How would you summarize God's approach to and heart behind discipline?

- b) When it comes to disciplining your children, what do you think you've gotten right? What do you think you've struggled with and/or are still working on?

TAKING IT HOME

6. Pastor Josh declared that as parents, we need to give our children Jesus. As a brief evaluation of how we're doing that, he provided the following set of questions. Read through those before discussing the corresponding questions as a group.

- Have your children ever seen you pray?
- Have your children ever seen you read your Bible?
- When something sports-related is happening on a weekend, does Jesus always lose out to the sport?
- Have your kids ever heard you pray over your spouse?
- Have you ever placed your hands on your child and prayed for them?
- Have your kids ever seen you fast?

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (NIV) – ⁵Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

a) How would you evaluate yourself on these questions? What stands out as you reflect on this list and your modeling of faith to those in your life?

b) If your children are grown and out of the house, what type of spiritual legacy did you leave for them? Have they continued that legacy? If you don't have children, who else in your life might benefit from seeing you model these behaviors?

7. What's your biggest takeaway from this week's sermon and group discussion? How can you put that into practice? Is there a conversation you want to or should have with any of the following – your spouse, your children, yourself, or God?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Intentional Parenting Groups | If you've enjoyed Stuck Together and want to dive deeper into creating a Godly vision for your family, this 6-week study could be the perfect for you! Parents will gather together to work through the Intentional Parenting workbook created by Doug and Cathy Fields. The cost is \$20 per couple, which covers the cost of the workbook and video access. Childcare is available for an additional cost. For more information, or to register, click on the link: <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1928128>
2. Stuck Together Podcast | If you're enjoying our Stuck Together sermon series on families and want to dive deeper, we encourage you to check out the companion podcast. The first episode - titled "The Elephant In The Room" - deals with conflict. Watch the podcast using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ISkkui38ao>
3. 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/>
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/>



COMMUNITY GROUPS

MISSION AND VISION

Groups Mission:

To provide people an opportunity to experience loving community as they pursue being a fully engaged follower of Christ.

Community Groups Vision:

To gather together regularly to share, study the Bible, and support one another. Community Groups are sermon-based, meaning they study a set of Bible passages and questions connected to the previous weekend's sermon.

Healthy Community Groups:

Community Groups are designed so that we can love and care for one another and put God's Word into action – all in pursuit of experiencing and living the extraordinary life. As you lead, keep the following in mind for evaluating the health of your group:

- **ENGAGE:** Groups are only successful when people invest their time and energy to genuinely engage the process by attending regularly, being honest, and developing relationship with other group members. This takes time, but it's worth it. | *Acts 2:42-27, Colossians 3:12-17*
- **ENCOURAGE:** One of the primary roles your group will play is in encouraging one another forward in your individual walks with Christ. This includes supporting one another through the messiness and trials of life.
 - *Hebrews 10: 23-25*
- **EQUIP:** Regularly encountering God's Word through the sermon, group discussion, and personal study will, over time, equip each group member to be a more fully engaged follower of Jesus. As this information permeates the heart, the Holy Spirit will provide application and personal growth.
 - *2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 14:25-26*
- **EMPOWER:** As your group meets, you will see some people naturally begin to exhibit spiritual gifts including leadership, shepherding, and hospitality. Be on the lookout for these developments. Empower these individuals to step into larger roles within the group, to consider leading or hosting their own group, or to serve where led. | *Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 3:10-14*
- **EXPAND:** As each member of your group begins to invest in their "8 to 15," it's natural for your group to add new members and to connect others into groups ministry. | *John 13:34-35*