

would know His followers by the love they had for each other. Jesus said that the world would know His followers by

Jesus said that the world would know His followers by the love they had for each other. Jesus said that the world

the love they had for each other. Jesus said that the world would know His followers by the love they had for each other.



COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

February 25, 2024

Stand Alone Sermon / Pastor Jeff Sharp

Fear of The Lord

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | What's one fear you've overcome that you're really proud of? Do you think fear is more of a hindrance or a motivator in life?
2. When you think about, reach out to, and spend time with God, is it more natural for you to envision a God who's loving and personal or a God who's holy (i.e., set apart)?

How do you believe your experience growing up (both inside and out of the church) impacted how you currently view and connect with God?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Walking in the fear of the Lord isn't the same as being afraid of God or tormented by His existence. Rather, it's seeing God with reverence and awe and responding accordingly with how we think and live.
 - a) Pastor Jeff shared that a reverence and awe for God begins by understanding that God is holy. How would you describe God's holiness?
 - b) How often do you meditate on God's holiness? Why could doing so be helpful?

4. As we contemplate God, it's important to understand and balance the attributes of God's love and holiness. Read John 3:16-21 and discuss the corresponding questions.

John 3:16-21 (NIV) – ¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

a) How do you see God's attributes of love and holiness working in this text?

b) When it comes to following God, why do we need a balance between God's love and holiness? Do you find the following quote from author John Bevere helpful in trying to articulate this balance?

"The love of God protects us from the ditch of legalism. Conversely, the fear of the Lord protects us from the ditch of lawlessness. Holy fear empowers me to stay on the highway of true holiness." – John Bevere, *The Awe of God*

5. When we walk in the fear of the Lord, we delight in God's commands. This is a core theme throughout the entire Bible. Read the following scriptures before discussing the corresponding questions.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 (NIV) – ¹²And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? ¹⁴To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. ¹⁶Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. ²⁰Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. ²¹He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. ²²Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 (NIV) – ⁹Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. ¹⁰The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. ¹¹The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. ¹²Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body. ¹³Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Psalms 112:1 (NIV) – Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.

John 15:5-17 (NIV) – ⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

- a) How is our delight in God's commands built upon our trust in God? If it helps, think of this question in the context of your earthy relationships too.

- b) Have you noticed a strong connection between your love for God and your willingness to delight in and obey God's commandments? Explain.
- c) Do you think it's possible for a person to obey God without delighting in His commands? In other words, how important is the posture of our heart when responding to God's commands?

TAKING IT HOME

6. Pastor Jeff shared that if we take sin lightly, it means we take God lightly. Out of a holy reverence for God, we're to stop taming our sin and instead strive to kill our sin by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Read the following Bible passages and quote before engaging in a time of personal reflection and group discussion.

Romans 8:12-13 (NIV) – ¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV) – 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.”

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.” – John Owen

Spend some time in quiet reflection and prayer. Is there a sin(s) God is bringing to mind that He wants you to stop taming and start killing? What are your next steps?

7. By the grace of God, Jesus makes it possible for us to have an ongoing relationship with a holy God. Jesus also calls us His friends (John 15:14-15). Read the following quote and Bible passage before engaging with the corresponding questions.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV) – ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

“The strength and well-being of a Christian depend on what his soul feeds on, as the health of the body depends on whatever we make our daily food. If we feed on what is according to our nature, we grow; if not, we pine away and die. The soul is of the nature of God, and nothing but what is according to his holiness can agree with it. Sin, of every kind, starves the soul, and makes it consume away. Let us not try to invert the order of God in his new creation: we shall only deceive ourselves. It is easy to forsake the will of God, and follow our own; but this will bring leanness into the soul. It is easy to satisfy ourselves without being possessed of the holiness and happiness of the gospel.” – John Wesley

How can you continue to cultivate your relationship with God? What areas of gratitude can you express back to God that would stir your desire to obey Him?

PRAYER REQUESTS

-
-
-
-
-
-

RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. 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>
2. Clarifying the Bible Workshop | 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 both campuses on Saturday, March 16th from 9am-12pm to watch the video course together over coffee. Register using this link: <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2163020>
3. 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/>