Group Discussion Guide for Week of 1/31/2021

Riverside Home Group Discussion Guide

Scripture Text from Sunday Sermon; Revelation 7:1-17 (NIV)

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. [2] Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: [3] "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." [4] Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. [5] From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, [6] from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, [7] from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, [8] from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.
[9] After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. [10] And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
[11] All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, [12] saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" [13] Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" [14] I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15] Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. [16] 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat. [17] For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

General Question Bank

Observation (what does the text say?) **I**nterpretation (what does it mean?) **A**pplication (what does it mean to me/us?)
Know (what does the text say about God?) **B**e (what does it say about us?) **D**o (what does it call us to do?)
Together (What is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?)

Discussion/Topic Starter (Ice Breaker)

- …in Sunday's sermon, Keith pointed out our culture's obsession with the "mark of the beast"? Why might we be more fascinated with the beast's mark than the seal that marks the servants of God?

Revelation 7

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

***Another way to ask: *"Choose one verse or phrase from the passage that stands out to you. This could be something you're intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further." Now share it with the group*

O: Why do you think the opening of the last seal is interrupted by the two visions of chapter 7? What purpose do they serve at this point in the story?

O: Read Revelation 7:9-17. Who makes up the great multitude that John *sees* (v. 9), and how does this crowd seem to differ from those John *heard* described in verses 4-8? How are they similar?

I: What benefit might the "seal" offer to those marked with it? (vs. 3-4, see Ephesians 1:13)

I: What might it mean that God will "spread his tend over them" (v. 15)?

A: When in your life have you experienced God as Lamb or God as Shepherd?

A: How might the vision of every nation united by the Lamb affect our attitude to people from different national, racial, or ethnic backgrounds than ours?

-How WILL you respond this week? What one question do you want us to ask of you next week in regard to this?

Recommended Follow-up:

- Pray: Pray together, and really focus in on that we are meeting with God, He's in the room, and He wants us to KNOW Him. Pray together, spend some time being silent (so we can listen, aka, "*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Then pray in response to the content from this letter in Revelation as well as to what the H.S. reveals to us.*
- Respond: Spend this week responding to God's word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.
- Read: Next week's sermon (2/7/2021) will focus on Revelation 8-9. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through it, and meditate on it.

An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides*:

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **"Know, Be, Do"** person. And since Jesus told us to "make disciples" we use the "Know, Be, Do" framework in our discussion guides. We believe the process for this transformation happens in community, hence the **"Together"** part of the Riverside mission as well.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- "What do we need to **know** about God?"
- "Who do we need to **be**?"
- "What do we need to **do**?"
- "**Together,** what is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?

Here is what we mean by "Know, Be, Do" (based on Colossians 1:9-10, see below)

Know – "*to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives…, growing in the knowledge of God."* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

Be – *"so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way."* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

Do – *"bearing fruit in every good work, …"* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *"bearing fruit in every good work"* then yields more "*growing in the knowledge of God."* In other words, while "Know, Be, Do" are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)* To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week**.

Colossians 1:9-10, NIV

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,…

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide relies heavily upon the following resources: *Thomas, Mack. The Complete Bible Discussion Guide: Old Testament and New Testament, Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study, Zondervan, along with the following group studies on Revelation: Wright (978-0830821990), MacArthur (978-0718035198), Navigators (978-0891092735), Lucado (978-0310086666), Witmer (978-1433543203), Stott (978-0830821792), Wiersbe (978-1434702319), Hathcoat (978-1511401296), Smith (978-1645070726), Hewitt (978-1501855443), Stevens (978-0830830213), Arthur (978-0736908061).*