

Series -

Date/s - 8 February 2015

Topic - First Love - Breakfast With Jesus (The Original)

Speaker/s - Elder Andrew Goh

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like "Lover of My Heart " or "With All I Am"

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will be able to:

1. Recall that God's first calling on their lives is to love Him
2. Know what it means to have left their first love and to recover it

Word [45 min]

Elder Andrew began by referring to the message which Pastor Lionel gave at the beginning of the year. His message exhorted Riverlifers to heed the call like the Ephesian church in Revelation 2: 4-7 to return to our first love. We left our first love when love for God is not high on our priority. Jesus calls us to repent and do the first works or He will come and remove the lampstand from its place. One does not lose his salvation when he leaves his first love but his life will become irrelevant and inconsequential. In 1 Corinthians 13:2, Paul wrote that all our works come to nothing without love. Jesus promises to give the overcomer in the church at Ephesus to eat from the tree of life.

Elder Andrew used John 21:15-19 to draw out the process of returning to the first love after the apostle Peter had denied knowing Jesus when the latter was captured to be crucified. Elder Andrew referred to John 13:37 and Mt 26:33 where Peter had professed his willingness to lay down his life for Jesus and Peter's confidence that Jesus can count on him to stand by him even if all were to leave him. John chapter 21 can be summarized as the passage with three questions, three answers and three commissions. Elder Andrew challenged us to examine if the three questions were indeed only one question. Through these questions, we can see the Lord's compassion and love for Peter; helping him to overcome his self-doubt, shame and guilt. Peter needed to forgive himself for having betrayed Jesus.

John recorded that Jesus appeared to Peter and six other disciples who had returned from a futile, night fishing trip. Jesus then directed them to net a miraculous catch of fish and prepared breakfast for them. After breakfast, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. Upon each of Peter's three confessions of his love for Jesus, the Lord gave him the three commissions to feed his lambs, tend his sheep and feed his sheep. Jesus also prophesied that Peter would glorify God by his death. Peter's desire to die for Jesus was fulfilled when he was crucified for his faith. Church tradition wrote that he was crucified upside down as he felt unworthy to die like Jesus, his Lord.

Elder Andrew ended his message by encouraging all Riverlifers to sign up with a cell for the upcoming Rediscovering the Gospel (RTG) discipleship journey back to our first love. The elders and many church leaders

have gone through this course and found that it brought them to a renewed and deeper love for God. May we be enabled through RTG to say with the apostle Paul in Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Discussion Questions

- 1 **Read John Chapter 21:15-19 which describes the three questions, answers and commissions. Elder Andrew alluded to Jesus using the Greek word “agapao”(unreserving) for love in the first two questions and the Greek word, “phileo”(friendship, reciprocal) for love in his last question to Peter. Peter had used the word “phileo” in his reply to each of Jesus’ questions. Share with your group how was Peter’s restoration accomplished through this encounter. [10 min]**

Leader’s Notes: *This is a recap question. Members are free to air their perceptions. Important points are:*

- *Jesus did not intend Peter to prove his love with words.*
 - *Peter already knew that Jesus forgave despite the shortcomings of a weak man.*
 - *Jesus wanted Peter to hear his own answers which would be the means to his own healing from shame, guilt and self-doubt.*
 - *Jesus accepted whatever sincere love Peter was able to give. At that point of time, Peter was only capable of “phileo” to Jesus, not the “agape” that Jesus mentioned.*
 - *Jesus responded to Peter’s consistent answer by giving him increasing level of responsibility, starting with feeding the young, then looking after and feeding the older followers.*
- 2 **a) What does it mean to have left your first love? [10 min]**
b) How can you return to your first love? [5 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a relate and reflect question.*

- a) *In Mt 22:37-40, Jesus taught that all the Law and the Prophets is summed up in the two commandments to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind and our neighbours as ourselves. Love for God is most often defined in the scriptures as obeying His commandments. (John 14:15 - If you love me, keep my commands. 2 John 1:6 - And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.) Love for our neighbours in scriptures is most often defined as putting the needs of others ahead of our own desires. (Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Philippians 2:3 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,) When loving God and loving man ceased to be our priority in life, we have left our first love and thus will become irrelevant and inconsequential to God’s kingdom.*
 - b) *Like Peter, we are to repent and approach God and hear what areas He wants us to work on to restore our love for Him and for those He has put in our paths. Use 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 to be familiar with Paul’s description on what love is and is not. Encourage members to share on the areas they have decided to work on. Pray for and support each other to obey what God has revealed. Talk also about priority areas of your life that have usurped God’s love in your heart and how you plan to deal with these.*
- 3 **Who are you shepherding? Read 1 Peter 5:2-4 and Psalm 23 and share with your group the tasks and attitudes of a good shepherd. End in prayer for the shepherds in your life. [15 min]**

Leader’s Notes: *This is a response question. Members may think that they are the sheep that need shepherding and not realize that everyone is called to “shepherd” those placed in their charge e.g. our*

children or a friend who is a new believer. We “shepherd” someone else who is younger in faith by teaching and modeling for them a life of love for God and men. We can also share God’s Word and works in our lives to encourage others, to care for and pray for them.

Encourage members to use 1 Peter 5:2-4 and Psalm 23 to guide them in their shepherding roles and not use them to critique people whom they consider to be shepherds that fall short of expectations. As suggested by Elder Andrew, members can read aloud Psalm 23 and substitute “The Lord as my shepherd” with “I am the shepherd”. The modified Psalm could look like this:

I am the shepherd who meets the needs of my sheep.

I make them lie down in green pastures;

I lead them besides still waters,

I seek to restore their souls

I lead them in paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake

I will accompany them and point them to God even as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death

My sheep will fear no evil because they know how to find comfort in God.

They will feast at God’s table and receive His anointing.

They are assured of God’s goodness and mercy following them all the days of their lives.

They will dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives.

End by praying for all the shepherds that the group has or knows.

Works [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. Members to delight themselves in the Lord. Seek His face daily and love Him whole heartedly.

Announcements

1. **RTG Registration** starts from 1 Feb – 27 Feb at Cell Connection Counter.
Leaders to collect their RTG materials by this Sun, 15 Feb after services. Leaders can collect Member’s pack after they have login to E-Life to register their members. Please register early.
2. **MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE 2015**
22 Mar – 19 Apr | Sun | Five sessions | 1.30pm – 5pm | Classrooms 214 & 215
For enquiries, call Christine Tan at 6511 4145 or email christinetan@riverlife.org.sg.