

Series - The Rise Of The Church

Date/s - 10 April 2016

Topic - Called to Community – Growing deeper by going smaller

Speaker/s - Pastor Ben KC Lee

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 “As We Gather”, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”, “Take Me Deeper”

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Learn about the calling of His church (*‘ekklesia’*)
2. Know what is *‘koinonia’* and being part of a community

Word [45 min]

Pastor Ben began by describing how our human characteristics are being stripped away in our modern Singapore society. This de-personalised lifestyle has unintentionally seeped into our church. Today, Christianity tends to center around events and buildings and the work of ministry is to get more people into the building. The modern view of Christianity is now simply about ‘sitting down and watching professionals put on a show’. Most go to church and attend Bible class but have never experienced personal discipleship. Thus, how can the call to community be realised?

Personal discipleship allows for spiritual process of transformation to take place. From Matthew 4:19, the disciples were called by Jesus to follow Him and that led them through a process of transformation. In Galatians 4:19, the cry is for us to be like Jesus Christ. Jesus had made a major impact on a small group of disciples with a greater relational value more than He did with the crowd (Mark 3: 7-13).

There are essentials for followers of Jesus Christ to be transformed into His likeness. First, we are called out – *‘ekklesia’*. This means to be ‘called out’ or ‘called together’ for a Person (1 Cor 16:19). This does not mean ‘building’. Churches have never been described as a building but as a ‘home’ where the early Christians gathered (1Corinthians 14:23). In Romans 16:23, the ‘whole church’ was referring to a large gathering of people supported by individuals. It allows individuals to have close relationship and it gives us a concept for a ‘home church’. The life of the church happens in the home. In Acts 5:42-47 and 20:20, we see the beginning of the house-to-house principle where disciples went to homes to teach and preach. It is not the buildings that God sanctifies but His people and we are the temple of God.

It was only in the 3rd century that the church ‘became’ a building giving Christianity a sense of permanence where believers bring the lost to the church whilst Jesus says go and seek the lost. This prompted the demand for leaders and resulted in the division between the clergy and laity. Consequently, there is a drop in being personal with an increase for programmes which could inhibit intimacy. Communication became one way rather than on teaching and learning, and application of God’s truth to our lives by sharing and doing His Will. We have to build people and not buildings. We are called out to be believers for a purpose.

Secondly, community that is 'koinonia' which means fellowship where we can love, encourage others and be trained in servanthood. The chief metaphor to describe the church is family. We have however become like consumers whose needs are being met by religious professionals. Living out God's truth that is, to live out the Gospel is not meant to be a private thing. It is to stay in communion with the Lord and one another; to embrace the Gospel is to enter into a purposeful community. It is easier to give a sermon outline than to invest our 2 hours in people. Spiritual life is not an offspring of programmes. Instead the goal of discipleship is that a disciple will abide in God's Word. John 14:15 says if we abide in His Word we are His disciples – one who obeys and abides in His Word.

Thirdly, cell group refers to a little community which is the basic building block of the church. A church is made up of ordinary people prepared for authentic community living, to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10: 24). The church is about coming together to discover truths from the Bible, living out the Gospel while loving God and others.

Discussion Questions

1. **What is a church? Ps Ben Lee mentioned that the church ('ekklesia') is called out for a purpose. What do you think is the "called-out" purpose of the church?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: A recap and relate question. A church can be described in a few ways. Have the members share briefly what they think church is. The leader can summarise with how church first started at the homes of members ("church-in-the-home" concept), going out into the streets – reaching out to the neighbourhood ("house-to-house") and living 'kampong' together. The church is the body of Christ (community) made up of individuals who have chosen to commit their lives to the purposes of God. Jesus said "Go! Seek the lost" versus bringing the lost to the building. How can we achieve such a purpose on an intentional basis?

2. **Read Ecclesiates 4:9-12 and share what matters most in community. How can we who are part of a cell group experience community and grow deeper?** [15 min]

Leader's notes: A relate and reflect question. Have members share with reference to the scripture what is key in coming together as one community. The speaker mentioned that to embrace the Gospel is to enter into community, forming a purposeful proximity. This is what happened in Mark 3:14 when Jesus appointed his twelve disciples so that they might be with him. Each believer can grow at his/her own pace in:

- a) discovering truths from the Bible to apply in our personal life
- b) finding God's will through a living faith
- c) learning to love God, others and ourselves by sharing burdens & joys
- d) experiencing the joy of answered prayer
- e) being mentored and mentoring others
- f) helping others to trust Jesus as Lord & Saviour

To experience community often takes more than what we have to give up for others' sakes; it means moving out of our comfort zones, even to confront sins in our lives both of which can be painful (eg. forgiveness and humility). Each of us should desire for spiritual transformation by examining ourselves and the world with Biblical truth through the knowledge of Christ. It is about obedience and bearing fruits for Jesus (John 15).

3. **What can we do as a cell group to make an impact in society as Jesus did together with His disciples?**

[15 min]

Leader's notes: A response question. Remind one another about all the relationships that we have and how we can live our lives that please God and influence others. Talk about what the cell can do as a group to make an impact in society (something you might have already planned since the beginning of this year). Take some time to pray about the action plan.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Every cell group in RiverLife Church will experience community, grow deeper in relationship with the Lord & each other.

Announcements

1. Parenting Workshop

Reaching the hearts of our teens

Dorcas Li and her team from Growing Families International

Sun, 15, 22, 29 May & 5 Jun | 2-6pm | Classrooms 207 & 208

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 8 May.

For enquiries, please contact Mary Lim at 65114149 or email her at marylim@riverlife.org.sg.