

Series - The Rise Of The Church

Date/s - 24 April 2016

Topic - Loving Beyond Self

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

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 “Beloved, let us love one another” or “A New Commandment”

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. The importance of being in a Church community.
2. How to look beyond ourselves and to reach out to others.

Word [45 min]

Ps Ernie shared about Roseto, a town in Pennsylvania USA which has the lowest number of heart attacks. Upon closer examination, researchers found that their work-life balance was bad. It was hard because many worked in quarries and because they were poor, they could not afford olive oil but used lard in their diet. They smoked and drank as much as they could. However, there was a very distinct difference in their social life. There was no quarrel and no unrest amongst the population. They had many social clubs and they looked after the elderly. Each person contributed to society and they were a very relational community. In short, this was why the town suffered the lowest rate of heart attacks.

In Acts 2:42 - 48, the Christians in Jerusalem devoted their lives to the teachings of the Apostles and to fellowship amongst themselves. They sold their properties and possessions to help one another as the body of Christ. Ps Ernie noticed that in the US, many are beginning to attend on-line “church services”. Many are no longer a part of a Church community.

How God defines the Christian Community (The Church)

Can I be a Christian but not part of a local church? It would be saying I am a soldier but did not join the army. Sanctification which is about becoming more and more like Jesus, cannot be done alone. It is a community project. As Jesus spent time with the disciples, His “DNA” was gradually nurtured into them. The “DNA” of the Church would be part of us when we belong to a community. We cannot build community without meeting up. Instead, we are connected to help and love one another, being a tightly knitted community. In 1 Peter 2:4-5, we are the living stones in this spiritual house of God. Using lego bricks, Ps Ernie demonstrated how a house cannot be built with bricks that are separated from one another.

Playing Our Part

In Hebrews 10:24, we are reminded that it is important to gather as often we can. Just like the early Church in the book of Acts, how do we involve ourselves in building others up in the Church community? Ps Ernie suggested encouragement, giving and restoration.

ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Thessalonians 5:11): One of the most important time in cell gathering is the supper. This is where small talks usually occur and we can steer these small talks into heart to heart talks. Conversations become more intimate. It opens up the hearts of one another and sharing life will happen naturally. The type of questions such as “How is everyone doing in their lives” can set the tone for towards a more authentic and genuine sharing.

GIVE (Acts 2:44-45): What happens when we downgrade our condos and bungalows to HDB flats and use our proceeds to help others in Church? An ideology such as this is demanding and this was what the Church in Acts was doing. There are however those who are rich and they hoard their resources and seldom reach out to help the needy or the poor. We must learn to be more generous to the needy ones in Church. There are three levels that we can help others:

- a) Cell level – individuals in cell.
- b) Church Level – those in God’s house. For eg. Kindergarten, RCS “Bless” programme – to reach the community
- c) Kingdom level – those who are from abroad. For eg. Clothings collection - think about donating new clothes besides old ones to missions drive.

RESTORE (Galatians 6:1-2): Let us avoid isolating those who are hurting. Instead, let’s restore them. Avoid badgering fellow believers who erred or have caused pain. Learn to look over differences and stand united. Restore instead of being judgmental. Let us keep family together.

The Enemies Of Community Building

What can affect the building of a Church community?

- a) Layers (2 Corinthians 4:2) refers to playing games in masks. Let us remove our disguise or “layers” when we come to cell. Remove our masks and be truthful and real to one another. Do not be afraid of our weakness but be “vulnerable” to one another and this will build intimacy amongst us.
- b) Offenses (1 Peter 5:5-8) talks about the devil going around seeking someone to devour. He does this by ensnaring them to do his will. We need to give up our rights to be angry or to hurt others because hurt people hurt people. Let us lay down our pride and forgive.

As believers, let us arise and be the Christian community that is full of encouragement, giving and restoration. At the same time, be vigilant as the devil prowls around to sow division through our differences and different practices. Let us choose to love others beyond ourselves in building God’s community.

Discussion Questions

1. **Share briefly on one of the enemies of building community that Pastor Ernie mentioned in the sermon.** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: A recap and relate question. Start by asking members on examples of layers or offences. Ask them on possible ways to avoid putting on layers and preventing offences to occur. What other factors are there which might cause barriers in relationships among cell members? What is one most helpful thing the cell needs in order to build community?

2. **Read Acts 2:42-47. Think of an area that you are currently giving through acts of service to build the church community. How has serving in the house of God affected you as a) an individual, b) your family or c) your relationship with God?** [15 min]

Leader's notes: *Relate & reflect. Acts of service is one of the ways that we can be involved in building community. Have members talked briefly their area/s of serving or ministry in the church household and share how has being involved contributed towards their life journey in the different aspects: Individual, Family and with God. At the individual level, growth in spiritual development (such as discovery of spiritual gifts, passion, spiritual maturity); At the family level, becoming a godly household model (family members serving together to meet the needs of others - parents modelling for the children, living and leaving a legacy for the generations); finally with God, being able to experience Him in spiritual intimacy such as having a vibrant relationship, abiding close to God and living out destiny & calling.*

The truth is that in giving, we also gain. When the community in the household of God gains through the giving, we in turn can also gain at the personal level. Psalm 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” God is naturally drawn towards a humble and contrite person.

3. **Read 1 Peter 4:8-11 out loud. What does this passage tell us about how we can build community and loving beyond ourselves? Share some practical ideas how that can be applied at one of these:** [15 min]
- Cell level
 - Church level
 - Kingdom level

Leader's notes: *A response question. Have members read the scripture out loud. Pause as members look through the verses in response to the question. Then you may wish to go 'round-robin' asking each member to share what he/she thinks a particular verse says. Get the larger group to give an example of how that verse can be applied when they interact with people. Do this until you complete covering the entire passage verses 8 to 11 of 1 Peter 4.*

Leader, you would know the needs of your cell and the dynamics. At the Church and Kingdom levels, you may wish to guide the cell to decide on one area of need to take part collectively in order to reach out to the community. A group project will foster closeness and build each member up.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

- All RiverLifers will continue to meet together, encouraging one another and all the more as we see the Day approaching.

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.

2. **Water Baptism Class**

Sat, 4 Jun | 9.30am-3.30pm | Classrooms 214 & 215

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 22 May.

For enquiries, please contact Clara Tan at 65114160 or email her at claratan@riverlife.org.sg.