

Series - The Rise of the Church

Date/s - 29 May 2016

Topic - The Church in Antioch – A Spirit-led Community That Rocked The Roman World

Speaker/s - Pastor Lionel Goh

**Welcome** [15 min]

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

[www.thesource4ym.com/games/](http://www.thesource4ym.com/games/)

[www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html) < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

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**Worship** [15 min]

You may select songs like “Spirit Touch Your Church” or “Come Holy Spirit”.

**Spiritual Objectives**

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

1. Understand the importance and the marks of a Spirit-led Church.
2. Be inspired to make the church an effective and Spirit-led community.

**Word** [45 min]

Pastor Lionel began the sermon by sharing that RiverLife Church has been consciously focusing in three areas which we need to do well:

- 1) Fostering a vibrant family through understanding the culture of honor
- 2) Maturing sons and daughters through discipleship and to be more like Christ
- 3) Revealing God’s glory through our testimony and fulfilling our missional calling in private and public – see Luke 4:18-19.

To reinforce the above three points, the current emphases of our church are:

- 1) Strengthening the foundation of the family by understanding that God loved us first (through RTG, LTG, RTF and PRECEPT)
- 2) Doing church as a family (a shift from being program-centric to instilling relational discipleship).

Referring to Acts 11:19-30, Ps Lionel then asked the congregation: what makes the Antioch Church so powerful and dynamic that it rocked the Roman world? In AD 42, many persecuted Christians in Jerusalem moved to Antioch and started a Church there. Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire with a population of more than 500,000 people. It was multi-religious and multi-racial. Besides being a Regional Administrative Centre, it was also the capital city of Syria and a major trading and commercial centre. It was rich but was an immoral city. Ironically, the Church thrived as a powerful and dynamic centre for God in Antioch and had a Spirit-led community of believers there. Here were the reasons:

**a) They were well disciplined in the Word (Acts 11:26)**

In the 1970s/ 80s, the ethnic tribes in Borneo had a major revival. There were signs, wonders and miraculous healings. Prophecies were uttered and all came to pass. That generation of tribal people became a vibrant and spirit-led community. However by the late 20th Century many had become lukewarm and some even turned back to animism. The reason? They were not taught the Word of God. The Word did not take root in their lives. In contrast, the Antioch Church focused on the teaching of the Word and many people were taught.

**b) A strong team of Godly leaders (Acts 13:1)**

The Antioch Church had very strong and capable leaders who were filled with the Spirit and were strong teachers of the Word. Prophets were also among them. Godly believers and leaders like Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus were in their midst. The leaders were all united, full of the Holy Spirit, full of faith, focusing on God and prayed together.

**c) A God-centric ministry (Acts 13:2)**

They had a very strong ministry in worship, prayer, fasting and their ministry was well grounded in the Word of God. Each and every believer saw the ministry as a service to God and one another. It was never about themselves but the focus was on God and serving others.

**d) A radical obedience to the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2, 3)**

The Antioch Church spent much time in worship, prayer and fasting. When the Holy Spirit prompted the church to ordain both Barnabas and Saul for special work, they immediately released them to God even though the two men were important leaders of the Church. They obeyed God when He spoke to them.

**e) Generous and had a kingdom mindset (Acts 11:27-30, 13:2-3)**

In Acts 11:27-30, a man called Agabus prophesied that there will be a famine. When the Antioch Church heard this, they immediately offered their help. Through Barnabas and Saul, they sent money to the believers in Judea. They had a kingdom mindset. To them, the church in Judea was part of them.

The Antioch Church became very powerful, influential and was the strongest Church in the latter half of the first century. They were led by the Spirit, strong in the Word and effective in their God-centric ministry. Led by strong leaders and having a kingdom mindset, they reached out to fellow believers and non-believers alike. They were obedient when God instructed them to carry out His plans.

Ps Lionel asked if we would aspire to grow and be a willing Church like the Antioch Church. He closed by sharing Jim Elliot's quote: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

**Discussion Questions**

1. **What are some things you know about the Antioch Church that impress you?** [10 min]

***Leader's Notes:*** A Recap question to encourage to kick-start discussion. Leaders can make reference to the parallels between Antioch and Singapore, as Singapore is referred to prophetically as the Antioch of Asia. Both cities were developed and occupied strategic locations on trade routes. Both were home to many different races and were shaped by cultural influences from around the world. The Antioch Church became a powerful and dynamic centre for God and showed that the Christian faith transcended these racial and cultural divides.

2. **Besides being blessed with supernatural signs, wonders and miracles, Pastor Lionel shared that the impact these bring could be lost if the Church is not anchored in the Word of God. How does the Word of God sustain the Church and grow members to be more God-centric?** [15 min]

***Leader's Notes:*** Leaders can affirm that God works through supernatural signs, wonders and miracles. If the local church is dependent on signs, wonders and miracles, the congregation might become accustomed to the spectacular all of the time thereby neglecting the Word of God. Sometimes, God choose to quietly deal with each one of us. Other times, He chooses to deal with us corporately as a congregation. Sometimes, we need to be still. Some of us equate and measure the presence of God to manifestations and therefore do not feel "satisfied" when no signs and wonders are evident. Such a

*relationship with God is based on the physical rather than spiritual. While God is never away from us, we need to look beyond our feelings and know in our spirit that regardless of how we feel, God is always worthy of our worship, in good times and in bad times, in difficult times and in easier times, and in freedom and in persecution. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that we are to give thanks in all situations. A person who based his or her faith through feelings will fall away when times are tough going and less exciting.*

*The Word of God, when heard, read, studied, memorized and meditated upon, will attune character with the character of God. We begin to understand perspectives from God's point of view. As we understand God's character, we begin to put aside ourselves and focus more and more on God and our fellow believers. The Bible is about God and loving His people. While it does not teach us to ignore our own needs, it also teaches us to turn from self and adopt the kingdom mindset as the Antioch church did when they reached out to assist the Judean Church. As "self" is broken down, sacrificial love permeates through and into the congregation of believers. The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE.*

**3. What are the marks of a Spirit-led Church? Relate one area of growth you would like to see in the RiverLife Church and/or the Cell Group.** [15 min]

**Leader's Notes:** *A Reflect and Response question. A Spirit-led Church is one that exhibits love. The congregation does not place expectations on one another, i.e., unconditional love. It accepts one another as they are. It reaches out and does not focus to take advantage of anyone or anything. It is conscious of sin and does not condemn but empathizes with sinners, enough to reach out to help. It seeks to contribute instead of taking. It prays. It holds the Word of God as the main emphasis in its spirituality. It reaches out of Church to spread the Gospel because of LOVE and not for other reasons. There is no strife amongst its various ministries but seeks to complement one another. It places equal importance on ALL of the five-fold ministries. It is both balanced in the ministries and the Word of God. Most of all, it allows only the Holy Spirit to convict and speak to the congregation. Above all, Yahweh occupies its adoration and worship.*

*Leaders can mention about developments in RiverLife Church and/or the Cell Group so that members can share their perspectives at a practical level on the growth opportunities for RiverLife Church and/or the Cell Group to be more Spirit-led.*

**Works** [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Every RiverLifer to get into the Word of God to know Him, His purposes & move in step with the Holy Spirit.

**Announcements**

1. Take the Whole Life Inventory

Visit [wholelife.sg/inventory](http://wholelife.sg/inventory), enter access code: RiverLife

2. **AGAPE LIVING FOR END-TIME REVIVAL**

*Sat, 4 Jun | 2pm-5pm | Victory Chapel*

Speaker: Rev Daniel Lim (2016 English Adult Camp Speaker)

Register online at [www.tinyurl.com/riverlifeseminar](http://www.tinyurl.com/riverlifeseminar). Limited seating capacity. Free admission

3. **RIGHT RELATIONSHIP**

**COMMUNICATION AT ITS BEST!**

A practical seminar & interactive workshop with Dave & Linda Roeder

*Wed, 6 Jul | 9am-4pm | Victory Chapel*

Cost: Adults: \$10 | Students: \$5 (includes lunch, tea break and participant notes)

Register with payment at the Information Counter by Sun, 26 Jun. For enquiries, please contact Anita Cheok at 65114138 or email her at [anitacheok@riverlife.org.sg](mailto:anitacheok@riverlife.org.sg).

**4. RTF Transformation Conference 2016**

*Thurs - Sat, 14 – 16 Jul | 9am – 9.30pm (14 & 15 Jul), 9am – 1pm (16 Jul) | Worship Centre*

Subsidised rate for RiverLifers: \$100 per pax (applicable for on-site registration at RiverLife Church Only)

Register with payment at the Information Counter by Sun, 3 Jul. For enquiries, please contact Anita Cheok at 65114138 or email her at [anitacheok@riverlife.org.sg](mailto:anitacheok@riverlife.org.sg).