

Series - On Your Mark

Date/s -

4 Mar 2018

Topic - The New Arrival

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 “How Great Thou Art”, “Here I Bow”, “Stay Amazed” or “I Have A Song”.

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Know that Jesus’ teaching focuses on the inward change.
2. Commit to act in truth and love in this new way of life.

Word [45 min]

With the arrival of the new, there will inevitably be tension with the old. Jesus was the new arrival on the scene, and his views on worship and religion conflicted with the established religious system of his time. In his sermon, Pastor Ben draws on 4 stories from Mark 2:13 – 3:6 that illustrate this. As Pastor Ben put it, “Jesus provoked a confrontation with the religious establishment, to show the true nature of freedom and life”.

The 4 stories that Pastor Ben discusses are: 1) Jesus eating with “sinners”; 2) Jesus’ disciples not fasting as the Pharisees required, 3) Jesus’ disciples picking grain on the Sabbath; and 4) Jesus healing the man with the shrivelled hand on the Sabbath. He then goes on to discuss the 4 stories in detail.

1. Jesus eating with “sinners” (Mark 2:13 – 17)

This story tells of Jesus eating with Levi the tax collector. The Jews considered tax collectors to be “sinners”. This is because their job was to collect taxes on behalf of the Roman empire which was occupying Israel at the time. In addition, tax collectors regularly collected more than was necessary and pocketed some of the money for themselves. Jesus however, not only accepted Levi but even ate with him. In Jewish custom, to have a meal with someone was to signify acceptance of that person. By having a meal with Levi, Jesus was signifying his acceptance of a “sinner”. This was offending to the Pharisees, because they did not mix with “sinners” and outcasts. But Jesus replied that he did not come to call the righteous, but the sinners (v. 17). We do not earn righteousness for ourselves by doing good works. **Jesus is our righteousness** (1 Cor 1:30). Righteousness is about living right as God intends us to (1 John 2:29), even more so, our righteousness is a *Person* – Jesus.

2. Jesus’ disciples not fasting as the Pharisees required (Mark 2:18-22)

In this story, the Pharisees accused Jesus’ disciples of not fasting as required by them. In the Torah (God’s law), the Israelites were required to fast only once in a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). The Pharisees instead, thinking that the more they fasted the holier they will be, added on a requirement to fast twice a week (on Monday and Thursday). Jesus’ disciples were accused of not fasting as the Pharisees required. The Pharisees had the mistaken view that true religion was meant to be solemn and joyless, and fasting is meant to be a solemn discipline. Jesus however, showed that true worship to God can be and is a

festive, joyful matter. **Jesus is a new way of life.** While there is nothing wrong with fasting, do we as modern-day Christians wrongly equate religious activity with true spirituality?

3. Jesus's disciples picking grain (Mark 2:23-28) and Jesus healing the man with the shrivelled hand, both on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)

Pastor Ben then continues to discuss the last 2 stories that illustrate that **Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.**

In the 3rd story, the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of not keeping the Sabbath when they picked grain to eat. In order to prevent the Sabbath commandment from being broken, the Pharisees created even stricter laws around it. It was these stricter man-made laws that Jesus' disciples were not observing; they were not breaking God's commandment to keep the Sabbath. God affirms the sacredness of both work and rest. The Sabbath rest affirms the special relationship and communion that God's people have with Him. The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Pastor Ben reminded us that these illustrations teach us that human needs take priority over human tradition.

In the 4th story, on another Sabbath, there was a man in the synagogue with a shrivelled hand. According to the Pharisees' law, it is forbidden to do work on the Sabbath including helping persons in need. Jesus however, proceeds to heal the man. This of course provokes the ire of the Pharisees. In Matthew 9:13, Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice". Just like Jesus, God wants us to do good and serve those who around us, and not simply to keep up a good image like the Pharisees.

These 4 stories show us that Jesus, the new arrival, teaches His followers a new way of life: a way that transforms the heart to be true followers and disciples of God. Jesus calls sinners to repentance, both the wayward and the self-righteous. He came, not to find religious people or good people, but to make sick people well and good.

Discussion Questions

1. **Which of the 4 stories touches you most deeply? Why?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a recap and relate question. It recaps the 4 stories, and relates the ancient Jewish setting of the stories to the present day by creating a personal link to the stories. Create an opportunity for members to answer truthfully without feeling pressured to do so.

Members' responses could give the leader an indication of how the cell meeting can be directed. If there seems to be a common thread in their responses, it may indicate a common worldview amongst the members that needs encouragement or correction, for example.

2. **The main point of Pastor Ben's sermon was that Jesus came to show a new way of life that contradicts the prevailing way of the time. The new way was focused on changing the heart, and not on outward appearances. Why is it so difficult to change on the inside?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: A reflect question. Members can reflect on the reasons why real change on the inside is so difficult and share examples from their personal journeys. We may resist change perhaps because of the perceived risk or fear. What are the obstacles?

The aim of this question is to reveal the point that when we focus on ourselves, we tend to focus only on outward change. Only when we take our eyes off ourselves and focus on God and others, we then put ourselves in a position for real change to take place in our lives. This will lead nicely on to the next question.

3. How do we start making real changes in our lives, as Jesus taught? [15 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question. This question aims to prompt members to think about how we can adopt the teachings of Christ into our lives.

If members are struggling to respond, some possible answers to prompt are:

1. Pastor Ben reminds that righteousness is a Person – Jesus. We cannot earn our own righteousness. Focus on Him and stop striving!
2. Jesus shows us a joyful way of life. Are we joyful in our walk with God, or just solemnly following rules? Start living a life of joy!
3. Jesus meant for us to help others. Do we go out of our way and be quick to help others in need? Take our eyes off ourselves and start serving!

By turning the focus away from ourselves and onto God and others, a true change of heart can take place. Leaders can ask members to commit to support one another in the commitment to make real changes. The Cell can also commit to pray regularly for these and be accountable to one another.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Every RiverLifer will focus on the things that truly matter – a change of heart, from the inside out.

Announcements

1. JOINING THE FAMILY

Sat, 14 Apr | 1.30pm-4.30pm | Grace Chapel

Sign up at the Information Counter or online at bit.ly/rlcjoiningthefamily by Sun, 8 Apr.

For more information, please contact Karen Koh at 65114139, or email her at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg.

2. LENT PRAYER ROOM

Fridays, 16 & 23 Mar | 8pm-10pm | Worship Centre

Programme for children aged 4-12 will run concurrently at Grace Chapel.

For catering purposes, kindly register your attendance at

bit.ly/riverlifelent2018 or at the Information Counter by Sun, 11 Mar.

3. MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE

Sat, 12 May | 10am-5pm & Sundays, 8, 15, 22 & 29 Apr & 6 May | 1.45pm-5pm

\$260 Per Couple | Classrooms 214/215 RiverLife Church

Register at the Information Counter by 1 Apr.

For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at christinetan@riverlife.org.sg or 65114141.

Church Vision Statement:

“A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father’s glory from generation to generation.”