

Series - On Your Mark!

Date/s - 28 October 2018

Topic - Pressed

Speaker/s - Pastor Ben K C Lee

**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 >

**Worship** [15 min]

You may select songs like “Living Hope”, “You Deserve It All”, “Jesus I Come” or “When I Survey”.

**Spiritual Objectives**

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

1. Allow God to press us, in order that we may learn true surrender to Christ, and
2. Commit to obey God’s will and let the sweet oil of submission flow out of us.

**Word** [45 min]

We come now to Mark 14 in the sermon series On Your Mark! This week’s sermon is taken from Mark 14:26-52. After celebrating the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples went to Gethsemane (meaning “oil press”) and there, Jesus contended with the burden of what He was soon to endure: the betrayal by His disciples, the agonising scourging, the excruciating crucifixion. Jesus knew that the burden would be immense, and He was already starting to feel the pressure. From His example, we encounter a beautiful illustration for how believers are to face pressures in life: allow God to press and test us, so that beautiful wine – not bitter whining – flows out of us.

God the Father longs to see His children grow in maturity, and trusting Him to lead them through the trials and pressing of life. He does this by allowing us to encounter tests. The scene in Gethsemane illustrates three key tests that God wants to bring us through:

**1) A test of pride (vv. 26 – 31)**

In this passage, Jesus prophesied that the disciples would fall away and betray Him. How did the disciples respond? They defended their loyalty to Jesus and said that they would never leave Him. Peter stubbornly declared that he would die for Christ, even after Jesus warned him that he would deny his Teacher three times before the rooster crowed. The disciples were confident and proud of their seeming steadfast loyalty to their Lord.

But we see just a few verses later (v. 50) that they all fled when Jesus was arrested. Their bravado was exposed for what it was – false.

How does Jesus compare to the disciples when faced with the pressure of imminent death? He placed His faith not in His own ability but instead trusted in His Father. According to Jewish tradition, the psalm that Jesus would have been singing with His disciples while celebrating the Passover meal was Psalm 118. Psalm 118:17 says “I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.” Jesus placed His hope beyond the

crucifixion and sung of His own resurrection! Jesus surrendered to the Father's will.

What can we learn from the disciples' failure and Jesus' meekness? We ought to place our confidence in Gethsemane: Jesus' sacrifice is the solution of our failing. When we think that we have it all together, that of our own ability we are able to make things work for good, we will find that we fall far short. Our confidence ought to be in God and not our own strength.

When we are *pressed*, will we produce a confidence in ourselves or a conviction of faith in God, and love for others?

## 2) A test of preparation (vv. 32 – 42)

Jesus was feeling the overwhelming burden of His impending death and brought His closest disciples – Peter, James, and John – with Him to stand with Him in prayer. While Jesus was praying intensely, they fell asleep. This happened not once, but three times. Why could the disciples not continue in prayer with Jesus, at the moment that He most needed their companionship?

Hebrews 5:7 tells us that “during the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death...” Jesus prayed regularly and made petition to His Father, and this prepared Him to be able to pray at the most crucial moment of His earthly life.

But the disciples fell asleep at the crucial moment. They could not stay awake when the moment of testing came. Gethsemane is where our flesh will be tempted to give in. When we are *pressed*, will we give in to temptation to “sleep”, or give in to God in submission to His will? Will RiverLife Church be a church that is prepared for prayer, for interceding for the Kingdom of God?

## 3) A test of perseverance (vv. 43-52)

A mob appeared to arrest Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus with the fateful kiss. Peter tried to defend his Lord by attacking the servant of the high priest and cut his ear off. The disciples finally had enough and fled. How did Jesus respond in the midst of all the chaos? He showed no sign of stress or worry and even healed the ear of the servant of the high priest. He spoke to the fears of the chief priests (vv. 48 – 49). Jesus was strengthened by prayer. The prayer that He prayed in Gethsemane gave Him the strength He needed to face the horrible task ahead.

Gethsemane is where you think you are strong, but the Enemy exposes your weakness. The disciples were confident to stand with their Lord, but they fell away and abandoned Him. The disciples could not stay awake to pray with their suffering Lord, and were not prepared. When the trials came and Jesus was about to be arrested, the disciples' weakness was exposed when they betrayed Him. Only Jesus, whose confidence was in His Father and who prepared Himself through prayer, had the strength to persevere through.

When we come to a Gethsemane in our life, what weaknesses will be exposed in us? A fear of man? A love of money? A pride that is unable to be vulnerable and honest to our cell group members? In our Gethsemane, Jesus promises us that He will be with us and will never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). But in our Gethsemane, Jesus invites us to be *pressed* – the question is what will flow out of us? Abandonment and betrayal toward the Lord Jesus? Or will He find faithfulness flowing out of us?

**Discussion Questions**

1. **What was the hardest challenge you have ever faced?** [10 min]

**Leader's Notes:** *This ice-breaking question is meant to prime members to start thinking about how God has pressed them in life. Based on the reaction of the members, leaders can decide to calibrate the question such that members do not necessarily need to share the "hardest" challenge they have faced (there may not be much discussion from this), but maybe something that they are comfortable to share, but might still be considered a "hard" challenge for them. Leaders can prompt members to share specifically on why the challenge was "hard" or what was being tested.*

2. **Do you think it was "fair" that Jesus received the wrath of God? What would have been "fair"? Is that a comforting thought?** [10 min]

**Leader's Notes:** *The answer to this question should be obvious: it was not fair for Jesus to suffer the wrath of God on our behalf. This question is meant to get members to re-evaluate the importance of our own conception of "fairness" in life. We struggle daily with what is "owed us." If we work hard and live honourably, then doesn't God owe us a good life? The prophet, Habakkuk, questioned God's "fairness" in using the wicked Chaldeans to punish the more righteous (Habakkuk 1:12-13). Life is not fair by man's definition, and as followers of Christ, we should not expect it to be so. When we are in our Gethsemane, God's pressing will cause us to let go of our stubborn grasp on "fairness" and instead be submitted to His will no matter how "unfair" to ourselves it may appear. We can also reflect on our missing the mark of goodness every day of our lives. If God was "fair", we would all be condemned – "For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23).<sup>1</sup> At Calvary, God appeared seemingly "unfair" – God treated Jesus as we deserve – He took our penalty – so that, when we believe in Him, God can then treat us as Jesus deserved (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

3. **How important was prayer to Jesus in his final hours before his death? How important is prayer when you are facing trials and temptations?** [10 min]

**Leader's Notes:** *This is a relate question. Throughout the Gospels, we see that prayer is central to Jesus' ministry and how He lived His life. Jesus prayed often and regularly with fervent cries and tears (Hebrews 5:7) and sometimes all night. At Gethsemane, prayer was pivotal to Jesus' response when faced with the greatest crisis. Jesus conversed with God and surrendered completely to the will of the Father. Prayer also expressed complete spiritual union with God the Father!*

*Timothy Keller provides the following touchstones of prayer (page 141) in his book Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God that members can consider when faced with trials and temptations,:*

*What Prayer Gives:*

*Perspective – Prayer reorients your view toward God*

*Strength – Prayer is spiritual union with God*

*Spiritual Reality – Prayer seeks a heart sense of the presence of God*

*Where Prayer Takes Us:*

*Self-Knowledge – Prayer requires and creates honesty and self-knowledge*

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <https://www.allaboutgod.com/is-god-unfair.htm> and pages 237-238 in *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Timothy Keller.

*Trust – Prayer requires and creates both restful trust and confident hope*

*Surrender – Prayer requires and creates surrender of the whole life in love to God.*

4. **Is there something that God wants you to stop doing, or to start obeying? Commit to that change and ask your cell to hold you accountable.** [15 min]

**Leader's Notes:** *This question is meant to get the commitment from members to practice submitting to God's pressing. Encourage members that although it will not be easy, but Christ has promise that He will be with us and will never forsake us in the pressing. Based on the comfort level of the group, this can be shared to all, or in smaller groups. Members can then commit to pray over and hold one another accountable for the commitments.*

### **Works** [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Thank God that He has provided a faithful high priest who understands our suffering. Pray that every RiverLifer will depend on Him and submit to His will in whatever situation they are facing.

### **Announcements**

#### 1. **THE WAR ROOM**

Fri, 16 Nov, 8-10pm, Worship Centre

A place we contend for faith of those dear to us

At the close of service several Sundays ago, parents and leaders responded to enter their War Room daily to contend for their strays.

Come 16 Nov, we are calling for all cells to gather in our RiverLife War Room. Together as a church family, we will contend for the faith of our loved ones and friends as we approach the Christmas season.

Come and meet as Warriors to take down strongholds in worship and prayer!

#### **Church Vision Statement:**

"A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father's glory from generation to generation."