



WEEKLY CELL GUIDE

23 MAY 2021 | RENEWING THE COVENANT | JOSHUA 5:1-12

Series : Journeying With God | Speaker : Ps Ben KC Lee



WELCOME

[15 MINS]

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

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)



WORSHIP

[15 MINS]

You may select songs like

1. God of Ages
 2. Way Maker
-



WORD

[45 MINS]

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Prepare to enter God's promises for us by renewing our covenant relationship with Him.
2. Let our lives constantly reflect our 'circumcised' hearts, to trust and obey God in all He tells us to do.
3. Make holiness and worship our top priorities as we prepare for spiritual battle.

SERMON SUMMARY

Joshua chapter 5 describes a turning point in the life of God's people. The Joshua generation finally crossed the Jordan River and into the promised land. The wandering in the wilderness caused by unbelief and disobedience of the last generation was over. And their enemies, having seen the miracle at the Jordan, were demoralised. Yet

instead of resuming in battle, God pressed the pause button and commanded all the men of Israel to be circumcised as a sign of returning to the covenant relationship He had with them. Like the Passover, they received God's promise in the consecration of circumcision. Both were significant preparations for the conquest of the promised land.

Today, heart circumcision (water baptism), and Passover (holy communion) are covenant signs for the Church. Like Israel, as a new covenant people, we are united by faith in Christ, and trusting in God becomes our primary identity that binds us as one family. Together, we shall fear the Lord, serve Him wholeheartedly, and hold fast to Him, giving up our self-will and replacing it with a complete surrender to God and His purposes.

SERMON RECAP

Ps Ben began this last message in the *Journeying with God* series with an exhortation to RiverLifers to lay down our lives on the altar to God every day. Our sacrifice to God is the building material He works with. Our consecration is not something we do for Jesus but an offering for Him to use and transform into something which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. In the act of offering our lives to God, we give up our ownership and control, and then watch what He will do with our lives. In this season of disruption and disorientation, our consecration and sacrifice are even more relevant and urgent. We must regain our balance and revive our spiritual passion for God.

In the Joshua story, God wanted consecration before conquest. He desired Israel's devotion to Him first before their conquest of Canaan. Because consecration is a spiritual preparation for the great task ahead, God wanted to reaffirm His covenant with Israel. In the same way, as new covenant people in Jesus, we need to renew our commitment to Christ for the great mission ahead of us.

1) Reaffirming our Covenant with the Lord (v 2-9) : Circumcision

- While the Joshua generation encamped in Gilgal ('rolled away'), God required them to be circumcised as a mark of the original covenant between God and Abraham. Removing a piece of flesh from their bodies was a sign of their friendship with God. This shared suffering in circumcision bound Israel together and enabled them to defeat their enemies and take the promised land.
- For us today, true circumcision was made by our Lord Jesus on the cross where He 'rolled away' our sin and shame, and marked us with His holiness. We are then to remove anything that stands between us and the Lord, and surrender completely to Him.
- Circumcision also points to water baptism, where we cross from death to life, from slavery to sin to freedom in Christ. See [Colossians 2:11-14](#). RiverLifers who are not water baptised are encouraged to do so.
- We need to have a heart that is pure and right before God so we can live a life that is distinctively different from the world. We must be a people who are willing to pay the price to demonstrate radical forgiveness and love which will impact people around us.
- Repentance is our starting point. We begin by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal anything in our life that needs to be changed. When he reveals them, we mourn over them, be convicted by them, allow God to do a deep work in us, and receive His grace and forgiveness.

2) Remembering the Lord's goodness (v 10-12) : Passover

- The Joshua generation remembered the deliverance of the Lord from their bondage in Egypt, the blood sacrifices, and the escape from slavery to freedom.
- Israel also recalled the commitment of the Lord in supplying supernatural food (manna) in the wilderness for 40 years. And when they finally obeyed God in taking Canaan by faith, God then supplied natural food (milk and honey, and more) from the promised land.
- While circumcision points to water baptism, Passover points to the holy communion. Baptism signals a beginning, while holy communion signals the ongoing and continuing nourishment by the Lord.
- God may not always act in the same way He has done in the past, but He can, and will, do new things for us today.
- As new covenant people, we are to relate with God with a soft new heart, leaving our self-centred life behind. If we still carry sin in our life, we must decide to repent and obey Him, and rely completely on Him for strength to do His will. If we find ourselves still complaining, remember God's goodness, count our blessings one by one, and be thankful always.

- As we step out in faith to serve the Lord, we remember the great things He has done in our lives. We recall His faithfulness in the past when He saved us, cleansed us, and blessed us. And we remind ourselves of His promises in the future when he will return in His final conquest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read [Joshua 5:1-3](#). The Israelites entered enemy territory and set up camp. But instead of taking up arms to fight, God puts the men under the knife! Have you ever faced a situation where obeying God didn't make sense from your perspective? [10 Mins]

Leader's Notes

A *relate* question. Chapter 5 describes the consecration of God's people in preparation for the great task before them. After miraculously crossing the Jordan, from all appearances it seemed like this was the time to attack. The people of Israel were motivated, and the enemy was demoralised, so surely, it was time to strike. But God had other plans. Circumcision before conquest. And of all the places to do it, God consecrated them in enemy territory in Jericho. This made them vulnerable to enemy attacks. It didn't make sense. But God did this because he first wanted to consecrate and align their hearts to His before the battle. In our own journeys, all of us will probably have experiences like that, where God 'interrupts' our plans. Sharing them in the cell will bring Scripture to life, and will edify and encourage one another to obey God and His Word, even when it doesn't make sense.

Transition

Before Israel was ready to face the enemy, they needed a preparation of the heart and a willingness to submit to God's directions so they might experience His power. To ensure victory, God first took them through the consecration of circumcision. Will we allow God to do something unexpected and even difficult to prepare us in our own battles?

2. What battles are you facing now? Are there circumstances in your life where you are 'running ahead' of God? Or do you see God pressing the pause button so He can lead you to something better? If so, what steps will you take to seek His plan for you?? [10 Mins]

Leader's Notes

A *respond* question. God will sometimes ask us to do something that doesn't make sense. But it is ultimately for our own good. There are spiritual values, priorities, and principles that are far more vital and fundamental to victory than our capacity to fight. When He does, will we trust Him enough to do what He says even if it makes no sense from our human perspective? Whether it is the pandemic situation, job uncertainty, relational difficulties, family issues, financial or health concerns, are we too often in a hurry to 'run ahead' of God and 'fix it'? To be 'successful' from God's standpoint, some things are more essential if we are going to attack the various fortresses in our life's circumstances. God's ways are always higher than our ways. His plans and promises are always better. Therefore, we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness ([Matthew 6:33](#)) before we do the obvious.

Transition

We can experience the full promises of God here and now. Instead of faithlessness, disobedience and having confidence in our own wisdom, let us prepare to enter into His promises for us by first affirming our covenant relationship with Him. Then, take clear steps that will help us live a consecrated life and to be aligned to His heart so that we will be able to do what He has called us to do.

3. In his sermon, Ps Ben asked RiverLife a pointed question: How will our shared suffering in this pandemic as a church and as a cell translate into ministry or outreach to our neighbours in Pasir Ris and Tampines? [15 Mins]

Leader's Notes

A *reflect and respond* question. Even as we struggle from the effects of the pandemic like everyone else, we must remember we are a people set apart for God. While we may suffer like the world, we are not like the

world. We have something valuable to give to the world at this critical time. Something the world is in desperate need of – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. People around us face anxiety, isolation and loss of their old way of life. Many face relational, financial and health issues which will often lead to a spiritual discussion. People tend to be open to the Gospel during times of trouble and transition. Let's not waste a crisis. Yet, we need God's wisdom to do a new thing at a time like this. For many of us, we have been over dependent on evangelistic services (bringing a non-believer to a service) and shyed away from personal evangelism. In light of the new paradigm shift, personal one-on-one evangelism will be a key tool in sharing the Gospel during this pandemic. Let's not shy away from reaching out to our immediate circle of non-believing family and friends, as well as those in our neighbourhood.

Get ideas for outreach to our friends and neighbours in these articles:

- https://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/348161/Lockdown_Evangelism.aspx
- <https://saturatetheworld.com/2020/09/23/how-the-pandemic-will-change-evangelism-for-good/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/10-ways-evangelize-pandemic/>

Closing

God desires to reaffirm His covenant with us, as we embrace our covenant relationship with Him. We see how God fulfilled His promises to Israel in the consecration of circumcision and Passover. Both were significant preparations for the conquest of the land. Today, these signs point to water baptism (servitude, submission and obedience to Christ) and holy communion (reminder of what Christ did in the past, a symbol of our present relationship with him and a promise of what he will do in the future). As God's new covenant people, we are to circumcise our hearts and remember His goodness as we set out to serve Him and reach the lost in these challenging times.



Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- Set some time at the end of the discussion to:
- Reaffirm our covenant with the Lord.
- Remember the Lord's goodness and faithfulness.
- Recall the deliverance of the Lord from our sin and shame.
- Renew our commitment to the Lord and set out to serve Him wholeheartedly.

2. COVID-19 in Singapore

- The COVID-19 situation in Singapore would be under control, and that we would revert to having low or no infection in the community and dormitories.
- Continued progress in Singapore to overcome the negative economic and social impact of the current crisis.

3. COVID-19 in South Asia

- A swift end to the COVID-19 crisis in the world, especially in India and the rest of South Asia.
- Healing and comfort for those who are sick and suffering.
- Protection and guidance for healthcare professionals at the front line; give them wisdom, courage, and strength to confront this crisis.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

[5 MINS]

1. **Bible Reading Plan.** You can access our 2-Year Bible Reading Plan 2021-2022 by visiting <https://rlc.sg/brp2021>.
2. **Water Baptism.** We will be having our Water Baptism Class on 29 May 2021. Do note that instead of an in-person session, the class will now be shifted online via a zoom session. The timing of the class has also changed. It will now run from 9AM - 1PM instead of 9AM - 3PM.
3. **SPYCES.** Span of 5 Sunday afternoons from 27 June, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm. rlc.sg/baptism-class



"HONOUR GOD WITH EVERYTHING YOU OWN;
GIVE HIM THE FIRST AND THE BEST."
PROVERBS 3:9 (MSG)

Give Digitally

Here are two cashless ways to give your tithes and offering.

1. PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app.
Scan this QR code on the right.

SCAN ME



2. Interbank Transfer

RiverLife Church Bank Account:
DBS Autosave 029-902431-0
Bank Code: 7171
Branch Code: 029

