



CHRISTMAS @ RIVERLIFE

Cell Guide (Leaders)

18 DEC 2022 | PASTOR DON WONG | A RAY OF HOPE

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Reflect on God's goodness, love and mercy
2. Recognise that despite man's sinfulness, God is a merciful and a good Father, and no one is too far for Him to reach.

SUMMARY OF SPEAKER'S TESTIMONY

Pastor Don shared his own testimony of how Jesus transformed him from an ex-convict, to a become a respected pastor, mentor and the executive director of The New Charis Mission, a non-profit organisation which provides a rehabilitation programme for former convicts who hope to reintegrate back into society.

Pastor Don joined the gang when he was 13 years old and was already involved with drugs before he reached the age of 14. He dropped out of school and mixed with friends who went to parties where they would take marijuana and mixed pills. At 14, he had his first taste of heroin, a move he said "ruined the next 20 years of his life". From the age of 16, he became heavily involved in gang rioting which led to his first brush with the law - a two-year probation sentence with a 7pm curfew. Shortly after, he was imprisoned for 6 months after his urine tested positive for drugs.

He recalled that when his parents came to visit him in prison, he promised his parents not to take drugs again. He lifted his hand and swore to them that he was done with drugs. But after being released at 1pm, he was high on drugs again by 3pm. Within just three months, he was sentenced to 1½ years in prison.

Ps Don thought that his life would change after he came out from the army. However, mixing around with the same gang of friends and having nightlife – he soon went back to drugs again. This time, he not only consumed drugs, he was also involved in trafficking drugs and illegal activities like gambling dens and loan sharks.

He thus began a cycle which saw him going in and out of jail nine times over two decades. Ps Don shared that when he was caught by the police just 1½ months before his wedding, he came to a point where he contemplated taking his own life. He thought to himself: "If I can't change, why don't I end my life instead of hurting my loved ones?"

But one day, when he attended chapel service, he felt God speaking to him through the words of the Bible. He began to feel so ashamed of the life he took so much pride in.

His life only started to change in 1993 when he not only accepted the Lord as his Saviour, but as the Lord of his life. That's where he started to have victory in life – by surrendering himself to God and reading His Word. He began to understand the purpose of life, got out of the gang and out of drug addiction which he had been in bondage for 20 years. It was both the Christian faith and the support and guidance of mentors that gave him a change of heart and made him determined to kick his old habits. Pastor Wong shared that the first two years were tough and there were many times when he wanted to go back to his old life again. But with the help of his mentors, something in him changed.

He shared: "When you believe in somebody and that person feels it, a miracle has already started in his heart. That's what happened to me and that motivated and inspired me, as my mentors helped me built a new, solid foundation.

Leaving his past behind, Pastor Wong then dedicated himself to giving back to society and providing ex-inmates with the support they badly need. In 1995, he joined the Community of Praise Baptist Church as a pastoral intern and also co-founded The HighPoint Halfway House. In 2005, he was ordained as a pastor. The New Charis Mission was subsequently set up in 2006 and is made up of staff members and volunteers who are also ex-offenders like him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Having heard Pastor Don's testimony of his radical transformation and how God turned his life around, can you recall your own journey of how God changed your life or a time where God turned a difficult situation in your life around? Share your own experience to encourage one another.**

Note to leaders

This is a recap and reflect question for members to reflect on the goodness of God in their lives. While not all of us may have experienced such a radical transformation like Pastor Don, all of us have sinned, and have experienced God's transformation and goodness in certain aspects or areas of our lives. Members can share how they experienced God's goodness in their own lives/situations. Member can also share their reflections of Ps Don's life testimony.

Suggestion: If you have pre-believers visiting your cell, you may consider getting one of your cell members to share their testimony during this time as a witness to the pre-believing visitors.

Transition

God is a good and merciful Father. No one is too far for Him to reach.

2. **Despite many attempts to change for the better, Ps Don failed each time. He shared that his life only started to turn around when he accepted Jesus not only as His Saviour, but as the Lord of his life, surrendering his life to God and reading God's word. Are there sins or addictions in your life that you find yourself going back to again and again? What can we learn from Ps Don's life testimony, on overcoming our own sins and addictions?**

Note to leaders:

This question is a reflect and respond question. Leaders can refer to Ps Don's testimony of how he finally overcame his drug addiction. Like Ps Don, many of us may still struggle with certain sins or addictions despite being a Christian. Members can share if there are areas they are struggling to overcome, or where they need to fully surrender to the Lord, to experience His victory and transformation. Leaders can invite members to share their struggles and pray for one another.

Transition

We can experience victory over our sins and circumstances, when we surrender our lives to Jesus and allow God's word to renew and transform our minds.

3. **Ps Don shared that it was partly his mentors' belief in him, that gave him a change of heart and made him determined to kick his old ways. Today, Ps Don is a mentor who dedicates his life to mentoring ex-offenders and providing them the support they need. There are also many in our midst (including Christian brothers /sisters) who need someone to believe in them and mentor them. As a cell, how can we journey with each other and also reach out to those around us who are struggling?**

Note to leaders:

Mentors not only provide support, they also ensure accountability in our journey towards change and transformation. This is a response question for members to consider: (i) how they can better support and journey with each other in their struggles, and (ii) how the cell can reach out to those around them (including pre-believers) in their own community and in the marketplace.

WORKS

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

1. Sermon Application

- Pray that we will remember God's goodness and mercy, and how He has transformed our own lives
- Pray that we will surrender our lives fully to God, including areas of sin and addiction we may have
- Pray that God will give us a heart and burden for those who are struggling, including pre-believers in our community

2. COVID-19 in Singapore

- Praise the Lord for the removal of the vaccinated-differentiated measures.
- Pray for God's protection in the midst of a high number of community cases.
- Pray for protection against reinfection and the ill effects that it may bring.

3. World

- A swift end to the COVID-19 crisis globally, if not a reduction in cases in third world nations, and a stable environment where humans and virus coexist.
- Pray for peace especially in areas of conflict (Ukraine) and potential conflict – China & Taiwan.

4. Opportunities for Outreach

- Ask the Lord to bless us as we step out to reach a pre-believer this Christmas.
- Ask the Lord to grant you opportunities to reach out to a non-believing loved one, friend, or colleague this week as we seek to mature in Christlikeness.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Digital Bulletin: rlc.sg/bulletin

1. **Free Shuttle Bus.** Available on Sundays (4-25 Dec). Pasir Ris MRT to RLC @ 8.15am, 8.30am, 8.45am). RLC to Pasir Ris MRT @ 11.15am, 11.30am, 11.45am.
2. **The RiverLife Welcome Lunch.** Sun, 8 Jan. 11am – 1pm. Welcome Lounge (Next to the Café). Hosted by our pastors, staff and leaders, this lunch is specially for those who started attending RLC services or cell groups in 2022. This is a connection point for you to get to know more about RLC and also to discover the next steps in your faith journey. RSVP Link: To be released next weekend.
3. **Advent Devotionals.** A four-week daily devotional written by our own RiverLifers to help you reflect on Christ and His presence in your life as we celebrate His birth. Each week will centre around one of the four descriptions of Jesus found in Isaiah 9:6. Link: rlc.sg/advent.
4. **Bible Reading Plan.** The church will be providing 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Links to these plans will be release next week.
 - 2 Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan.
 - 3 Year Bible Reading Schedule (Alternating readings between Old and New Testament passages)
 - Redemptive Historical Bible Reading Plan (At your own pace, focusing on the redemption story)
5. **Watchnight Service. Sat, 31 Dec. 8.30pm – 12.00am. Victory Chapel.** Join us for a time of worship and thanksgiving as we reflect on what God has done for us in 2022 individually and collectively. After the service, we will fellowship over Teochew porridge.

6. **RiverLife Prayer Room.** Closed until 2023.
7. **9M Ministry.** The 9M Ministry provides prayer support for expectant mothers on their 9-month journey of pregnancy. Sisters-in-Christ who are fellow RiverLifers are assigned as Prayer Buddies to walk alongside mums who sign up to receive prayer support.
 - Receive Prayer Support: rlc.sg/9m
 - Provide Prayer Support: rlc.sg/serve
8. **Global Hunger Fund.** This fund will go towards RLC's mission partners to help their local churches and communities gain access to food amid soaring costs. Refer to the [Digital Bulletin](#) for more details.
9. **Call for SuperLife Volunteers.** If you have a heart for children and a desire to disciple them in their spiritual journey, come be a part of the SuperLife team. Sign up at rlc.sg/serve. Immediate needs:
 - *SuperLife Primary Teacher* (Serve twice a month. Facilitate small group discussions after each Bible lesson, connect and pray with the children, be involved in SuperLife Ministry events, etc.)
 - *Special Needs Chaperone.* (Serve twice a month. Provided 1-1 support to children with special needs and help facilitate an inclusive environment between children with and without special needs.)
10. **Technical & Production (TAP) Ministry Recruitment.** The TAP ministry comprises five teams – audio, graphics, lighting, sound and video – and they all work as one in partnership with the Holy Spirit to support an atmosphere that allows the congregation to encounter God. We are now opening up recruitment for this ministry. If you desire to take the next step in your walk with God through starting to serve, we invite you to sign up to explore serving in one of the five TAP teams. You may sign up online at rlc.sg/serve or refer to our [digital bulletin](#) for more details.
11. **RiverLife Podcast.** The RiverLife Podcast allows you to listen to RiverLife content anytime, anywhere! The link to go to is rlc.sg/podcast or simply search '**The RiverLife Podcast**' on Spotify.
12. **Spiritual Growth Resources.** We have put together a curated list of recommended resources for the RiverLife family. These resources (books, articles, podcasts and videos) are recommendations for the various spiritual growth stages as you seek to grow deeper in the River of God this year. You can access them at rlc.sg/resource. This list will be continually populated throughout the year.
13. **Cradle Roll.** Our Cradle Roll is open from 9am to 10.30am every Sunday for children 24 months and below. *NO booking of tickets is required.*
14. **Prayer Ministry.** If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. unforgiveness, demonic oppression, etc), you can sign up for RLC's RTF ministry: <https://bit.ly/rlcrtf>
15. **Testimony.** If you have a testimony to share, you can write to us at stories@riverlife.org.sg to share with us your testimony as an encouragement to others.

ONLINE GIVING TO MISSIONS

Donate digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200100806DTNO.

Interbank Transfer

UOB Account 450-309634-4

Kindly indicate "Missions" in your transaction reference.



ONLINE GIVING TO RIVERLIFE CHURCH

Contribute your tithes and offering digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200100806DSCB.

Interbank Transfer

RiverLife Church Bank Account: DBS Autosave 029-902431-0

Bank Code: 7171 / Branch Code: 029



ONLINE DONATION TO RIVERLIFE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Donate digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200711586WDON

Kindly indicate your NRIC No. under the Bill Reference to qualify for tax deduction.

