

DATE: 23 APR 2023 | SPEAKER: PS BEN KC LEE | TOPIC: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS | SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 18-19

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Desire to forgive the difficult person(s) in their lives, and let go of any bitterness caused by difficult relationship(s)
2. Commit to not be spear throwers but harp players – to treat the difficult person(s) in our lives well

SERMON SUMMARY

How do we deal with difficult relationships? Drawing lessons from the conflict between Saul and David in [1 Samuel 18-19](#), Ps Ben shares how we can respond to difficult relationships in a godly way without retaliating or reacting.

SERMON RECAP

One of David's most difficult relationships was with King Saul. Saul was David's boss, his father-in-law, and the father of his best friend, Jonathan. Although Saul started out loving David, he later resented David and threw spears to murder him ([1 Samuel 18:10-11](#)). Ps Ben highlighted that we all have Saul-like tendencies of spear throwing – it may not be physical spears, but word spears ([Proverbs 12:18](#)). How do we deal with this spear throwing tendencies? And how do we deal with spear throwers?

1. When You are Tempted to Throw Spears

a. Ask God to search you and reveal what's going on inside

Often, the conflict in our lives is to some degree due to our own sinful attitudes and actions. Whenever we use sharp words on others, it reveals a lot more about ourselves, than the person we are "cutting down". We often "cut down" others to lift ourselves up. Hence, we need to ask God to search our hearts ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)) to reveal the inner securities, and the lies that blind us from the truth.

b. Don't let sin go unchecked in your life

Saul allowed jealousy to fester in his heart. This jealousy worsened when he saw how successful and loved David was. Sin distorts our perception of reality. Saul felt increasingly threatened by David, even though David's success had no relation to Saul's success as a king. This allowed Satan to turn Saul's sin into sinful actions. The damage of sin is also evident in our relationships. The ultimate impact of sin is broken relationships – both with our Abba Father, and with each other.

"Be killing sin or it will be killing you" – John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

[Romans 8:13](#) tells us that sin kills, and that if you "put to death the misdeeds of the body," you will live. Ps Ben encouraged us to fight sin with the power of the Holy Spirit, armed with

the Word of God. He emphasised the importance of being in the Word daily and having a spiritual community.

c. **Use the harp instead of the spear**

David chose to use the harp instead of the spear (1 Samuel 16:23; 18:10). The music (of praise and worship) stopped in Saul's house when he threw the spear. When we are offended, what is the first thing we pick up? The spear or the harp? 2 Corinthians 10:4 reminds us that *"the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world..."* Take up the harp of praise and not the spear of retaliation. The harp symbolises worship, love and kindness. The spear speaks of power, force and violence.

2. When Someone Throws Spears at You

a. **David refused to function as Saul's enemy**

1 Samuel 18:11 tells us that *"...David eluded him (Saul) twice."* This means that after the first miss, David came back and played the harp for Saul again. David knew the danger and Saul's heart/intent, but David trusted the Lord even more. Although Saul then planned two marriage-related plots to get David killed, God intervened and both of Saul's plans backfired. The whole time, David never considered Saul his enemy because he trusted the Lord as his protector and judge. He submitted to God's sovereignty and timing.

b. **David forgave Saul for the murder attempts on him.**

David was willing to forgive and to be reconciled. In 1 Samuel 19:6-7, David made a serious attempt to reconcile with Saul despite Saul's animosity. He also continued to serve Saul in fighting Saul's battles, even after Saul threw the spear twice (1 Samuel 18:13).

Romans 12:18 exhorts us to be the godly/more mature person, and forgive. To forgive does not mean you are excusing the offence, saying that it's ok or forgetting what happened. To forgive means to get the poison of bitterness out of your heart, and give it to God.

c. **David humbly confronted Saul with his sin.**

David talked with Saul directly (1 Samuel 24:8-22, 26:13-25) and indirectly through Jonathan (1 Samuel 19:4-5).

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." - Matthew 18:15-17

Through the ups and downs in David's conflict with Saul, the only constant was David's close relationship with God. David knew that it greatly pleased God to treat Saul with more love than less love. David discovered that God could use the spear thrower to develop his character, to adjust his attitudes and increase his faith. He discovered that God had a training program for his life. The Lord has a training program for each one of us as well. He wants to develop our character.

In closing, Ps Ben exhorted us to treat the difficult person(s) in our life well, because we are also someone else's difficult person. He invited:

- (i) Those who have been hurt by difficult relationships, to let Jesus heal the bitterness from the spear marks in their hearts.
- (ii) Those who are spear throwers/have spear throwing tendencies, to repent and ask God to help them be more like Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Think about a time when you were “hit by a spear” or offended by someone. What was your response? How did your response affect your relationship with the person?**

Leader's Notes

This is a recap and relate question. Leaders can ask members to share a current or past conflict or incident with someone, and:

- whether they took up the spear of retaliation or the harp of reconciliation, when offended (a harp is an instrument for healing and a spear for hurting).
- how they dealt with the emotional hurts and unforgiveness, caused by others/the offender

Transition

Although Saul attempted to kill David multiple times, David refused to function as Saul’s enemy and forgave Saul for the murder attempts on him. Like David, let us learn not to fight back but to take up the harp, forgive those who offend us, and trust God, who is our refuge and strength.

2. **While we have been on the receiving end of others’ spears, we all have tendencies of spear throwing (i.e., word spears) as well. How do you know if you are a spear thrower? Are there certain difficult relationship(s) or people in your life where you have the tendency to throw spears at? How might God be using these relationship(s) to develop your character?**

Leader's Notes

This is a response question for members to reflect on the relationships in their lives, and whether they have been spear throwers to others. Leaders can encourage members to learn from the response of David to trust in God to be their protector and judge, and submit to His sovereign will and timing in their difficult relationships.

Transition

David discovered that God could use the spear thrower (Saul) to develop his character, to adjust his attitudes and increase his faith. Just like how God had a training program for David’s life, the Lord has a training program for each one of us as well. He wants to develop our character.

3. **Ps Ben exhorted us to treat the difficult person(s) in our life well, because we are also someone else’s difficult person. What are some practical actions you can take, to bring about healing or reconciliation to the difficult relationship(s) in your life?**

Leader's Notes

Leaders can invite members to share some ways they can change or adjust their response to the difficult relationships in their lives (e.g., fighting sin in the power of the Holy Spirit, being in the Word daily, keeping themselves accountable through a spiritual community, using the harp of praise and intercession instead of the spear).

Closing

Jesus offers to bring healing to our relationships. Leaders can close the session with a time of prayer, for members who are facing difficult relationships, as well as healing for those who have been emotionally scarred from the hurts and spear marks by others.

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

- Ask God to help us love and forgive the difficult person(s) in our lives, and treat them well
- Pray for God to heal any bitterness or emotional hurts and scars caused by difficult relationships /others

2. World

- Pray for a quick decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases in Singapore
- Pray for the tense situation along the straits of Taiwan
- Pray for peace in the Russia-Ukraine war and in the US-China conflict.

3. Opportunities for Outreach

- Ask the Lord to bless us as we step out to reach a pre-believer.
- 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. New Sermon Series: Be Brave

This series will address 4 major life challenges that we face, and help us remain steadfast as we get ready for Jesus' return

- 16 Apr – Nurturing Mental Wellness
- 23 Apr – Dealing with Difficult Relationships
- 30 Apr – Building Resilience in Life
- 07 May – Navigating in an Age of Deception

2. Beyond the Pulpit – Nurturing Mental Wellness

- Devotional: *Through the Path of Suffering – A 28-Day Devotional for Those with Anxiety Disorder*. Drawing from his personal journey of being diagnosed with anxiety disorder 11 years ago, Pastor Ernie Song shares this 28-day devotional for those walking a similar path. Access the digital devo here: rlc.sg/AnxietyDevotional
- Podcast: Conversations Regarding Mental Wellness in order to understand Mental Wellness at a deeper level.
 - *Nurturing Mental Wellness (A Pastoral Perspective)* with Ps. Rick Toh (Lead Pastor of Yio Chu Kang Chapel). Links: [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)
 - *Nurturing Mental Wellness (A Medical Perspective)* with Dr. Leslie Lim (Associate Professor of SGH specialising in Psychiatry). Links: To Be Released

3. Marriage Preparation Course Run 2. 4 & 25 June & 2 July (3 Sessions). Cost: \$50. Register: rlc.sg/mpc.

4. **RiverLife Community Services.**
 - **RCS Family Movie Day 2023 Sat, 17 Jun. 9am to 12pm. Shaw Theatres Lido Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse.** With every donation of \$100, you will receive 2 complimentary tickets to the movie screening. *You may opt to donate your complimentary tickets to our beneficiaries so that they and their families can join in the movie screening.* Register and donate online: tinyurl.com/rcsmovieday23.
 - **Serve Together as a Family.** Find out more about RiverLife Community Services and how you can play a part in caring for the community! Link: [RCS Serving Opportunities](#)

5. **Young Adults Camp | Commune. 7 – 9 July 2023. Opero Hotel Southkey, Johor Bahru.** If the end goal of discipleship is transformation unto Christlikeness, then beholding is foundational to the life of every believer. We are called to behold Jesus together—to commune with God within the context of community. So, let's embark on this journey together to gain a fuller understanding of God, a better glimpse of the radiant Church He desires, and the courage to walk faithfully with community until He returns. Come, be part of this journey!
 - Early Bird Fees (Until 16 Apr): \$210 (Student/NSF), \$260 (Adult).
 - Regular Fees (17 Apr – 7 May): \$240 (Student/NSF), \$290 (Adult).
 - Register at rlc.sg/yacamp2023.
 - Enquiries: yacamp@riverlife.org.sg

6. **MegaLife Camp (Ages 13-18).** 15-18 Jun (Thu-Sun) RELC International Hotel (30 Orange Grove Rd) & RiverLife Church. Registration details will be released next weekend.
 - Early Bird (1-16 Apr): \$200 per pax
 - Normal (17-23 Apr): \$230 per pax

7. **Israel Messianic Encounter. 20 Nov – 1 Dec. Cost: \$4,950 (30 pax trip), \$4,850 (40 pax trip).** Join this trip and receive a revelation of the significance of Israel in the end times. You will gain a deeper appreciation of the cultural and geographical background of Scripture, and rediscover your Hebraic spiritual roots. Registration closes on 30 April 2023. For More Information: <https://event.actexplorer.com> (Password: RLKCC2023IME)

8. **Church Calendar Highlights**
 - *Quarter 2*
 - Bible Equipping – Acts: 26 & 28 May, 2 & 4 Jun
 - Children's Camp: 8-10 Jun
 - Youth Camp: 15-18 Jun
 - Cell Revival Nights (Fridays): 2 – 30 Jun
 - *Quarter 3*
 - Young Adult Camp: 7-9 Jul
 - 32nd Anniversary Weekend: 26-27 Aug
 - Bible Equipping – Leviticus: 15 & 17, 22 & 24 Sep
 - Cells Prayer Night #2: 29 Sep
 - *Quarter 4*
 - Equipping Series: 17 & 19, 24 & 26 Nov
 - Christmas Outreach: Dec
 - Cells Prayer Night #3: 29 Dec

9. **RiverLife Prayer Meetings.**
 - **RLC Prayer Room.** Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Online: rlc.sg/rpr-watch)
 - **Wed Night Prayer Meeting.** Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel.

10. **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
11. **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.
12. **RiverLife Cares Opportunities.** Signup: <http://rlc.sg/serve-rlcares>
13. **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.)
14. **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.
15. **Bible Reading Plan.** The church has provided 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Link: rlc.sg/brp
 - 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)
16. **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.
17. **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.
18. **Prayer Ministry.** If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. fear, worry, etc), you can sign up for RLC's RTF ministry: <https://bit.ly/rlcrtf>
19. **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.
20. **Stay Connected with RLC.** Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.
 - **WhatsApp Broadcast:** Text 'Subscribe' to 8923 1939
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