

Date: 31 Dec 2023 | Speaker: Ps. Ben KC Lee | Topic: Thanksgiving 2023 | Scripture: Ezekiel 47:9

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Reflect and give thanks to God for what has happened in 2023
2. Take time to appreciate others who have been a blessing to us in small and big ways

SERMON SUMMARY

RiverLife rounded up 2023 with thanksgiving. As a church, we were reminded of the importance of giving thanks to God as well as to practice appreciation to those around us, especially the unsung heroes. SP Ben then shared a summary of the key events of the year – how God brought about Awakening, and worked in us to bring Oneness as well as God's faithfulness as we saw fruits in the Small Beginnings initiated in our Church.

SERMON RECAP

In the first part of the service, Ps. Ernie led the congregation into a time of thanksgiving. For Christians, we give thanks at the end of each year because the good things that happen to us in our lives is never by chance. It flows out of the goodness of God into our lives. That is why we give thanks individually, as families and as a spiritual family.

Our thanksgiving should not be limited to God only. God has used many people to bless us throughout the year. It is through their willingness to be used by God, that we have been blessed. Therefore, we must explicitly thank and appreciate those that have been a blessing in our lives!

Three RiverLifers also shared their testimonies of thanksgiving:

1. **Helen** shared about how God healed her of a complicated and complex cervical cancer. While undergoing treatment for her cancer, God's Word and the care of her cell members were a great support to her. She also experienced God's touch and complete healing as she tuned in to the 21 days of Prayer sessions, and continually trusted God through prayer.
2. **Thong Wee and Cindy** shared about their recent mission trip experience to the Philippines. They shared on how they desired to let their 3 daughters experience being on a mission trip but they encountered spiritual roadblocks as they embarked on this. However, they came together to pray with each other. As a family, they engaged in devotion and positioned their family in a God-centred community through inner healing, marriage retreat, parents' gatherings and mission trip trainings. Their family of 5 went on a mission trip to Pangasinan in December 2023 for the first time. While they met with difficulties with the physical environment, they pressed on and their daughters were actively engaged in the programmes and saw God working in and through them and the team.
3. **Linus and Janice** shared about how they became rooted in the Church and in their cell as they engaged in the 21 days of prayer and fasting, made the public declaration of baptism and attended the marriage retreat. Prior to the marriage retreat, their marriage became functional as the children became a higher priority than their marriage. This resulted in constant conflicts. However, at the marriage retreat, God reminded them of how He designed marriage to be a reflection of Christ' relationship with the Church. Therefore, spouses are to prioritise each other as the most important earthly relationship. They decided to prioritize each other and are currently on a journey to honour and to love each other sacrificially.

Discussion Questions

In the second part of the service, Pastor Ben shared a short thanksgiving of what God has done in our midst over 2023, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. There was an **AWAKENING** in our midst evidenced by a shift in the spiritual atmosphere and a powerful move of God during Pentecost Sunday and the 21 Days Prayer and Fasting season.
2. There was an increase in **ONENESS**. This is seen in the various marriages in our midst and the MegaLife Emerge Camp. The 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting has also brought the church together. God has also begun to streamline the church towards having an end time focus and a greater desire for authenticity.
3. Finally, 2023 was a year of **SMALL BEGINNINGS**. We begin to see fruits taking place in the various life-stages, in our evangelism and mission initiatives, as well as through the generosity of our members.

Discussion Questions

1. **As a cell, take time to reflect on the journey you have taken on as a cell together – what are the highs and lows? How did God see you all through? Is there any thanksgiving you would like to give to God?**

Leader's Notes

This question aims to let the cell take time to reflect on their cell journey and to consider what were the good moments, as well as the trying moments – for the cell to reflect and give thanks and to renew their commitment to God and to the spiritual community they are placed in.

Transition

Let us also focus on giving thanks to God and share how He has journeyed with us in 2023.

2. **Share with your cell how 2023 has been for you. The following are 2 tools you can use to help you in your reflection.**

Tool #1 – The Prayer of Examen by St. Ignatius of Loyola

The Prayer of Examen by Ignatius of Loyola is a way to examine my life in the presence of God as practiced by St. Ignatius. Lead your cell members through the 5 steps below to help them reflect on the year:

Begin by posturing yourself to be ready to hear and interact with God and His Spirit.

- a) **Relish** – Become aware of God's presence. Focus on the year's gifts. Look at the work you have done, the people you have interacted with. Pay attention to the small things – the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details. What are you grateful for?
- b) **Repent** – Ask God to reveal to you some of your mistakes or ways you might have hurt yourself or others. He already knows you and loves you deeply. In what ways did you respond in fear or anger this year? Ask the Lord to forgive you and agree with Him that you are forgiven and restored.
- c) **Review** – Review on what happened each month and take notice of any feelings or movements that occur in your heart. What is God saying to you through these feelings? Where are these feelings or interactions taking you – towards God, others or towards self-sufficiency? When did you notice the love of God?
- d) **Request** – Present to God one major request you have for the following year. Allow God to respond to you. Ask God to show you what is important to pay attention to. It may feel significant or insignificant. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart, whether intercession, praise, repentance or gratitude.
- e) **Resolve** – Ask God to show you how you can respond or act differently the following year. What is one thing you will choose to do differently? Seek God's guidance and ask for help to look for insights throughout the year. Who does God want you to be tomorrow? Resolve to put it into practice.

End this time by thanking God for His goodness and grace towards you in 2023.

Discussion Questions

Tool #2 – Wrap Up Tool by the Project J

THE 2023 WRAP UP	
My Year	Describe your 2023 in three words.
Memorial Markers	What were some of its best moments?
Thanksgiving	What are you most grateful for?
Growth	In what areas have you grown?
Lesson	What's the biggest lesson you've learned? What have you overcome?
Affirmation	What are you most proud of? (a professional or personal project, a skill attained, letting go of unhealthy habits, etc.)
MAPPING YOUR 2024 JOURNEY	
My Year	Declare three words into your 2024
Discern	What is your God saying about your season?
Anchor	What are some Bible verses and/or promises to hold on to as you enter into 2024?
Spirit	How would your relationship with God look like in 2024? (What are some things you need to put in place or let go of in order to grow deeper in love with Jesus?)
Soul	What makes you come alive? (Do more of these things. What or who do you have to let go, change or prioritise in order to have a healthy rhythm and headspace for 2024?)
Body	What are physical health goals for the upcoming year? (How can you be intentional about this? What simple routines can you put in place? E.. eat less of, eat more of, do more of, do less of)

Transition

Let us thank God and rejoice for His faithfulness in our lives! May we continue to pursue after Him as One church!

- 3. What are some ways we can show gratitude to people who have been a blessing to us? What are some ways we can cultivate the practice of gratitude in our lives?**

Leader's Notes

Members can take time to consider how cultivating a practice of gratitude helps us and encourages others. Members can share ways they could appreciate people in their lives.

Closing

As we give thanks to God for what has happened in 2023 and look to Him for what is ahead, may we continually remember His faithfulness and, may we love each other like how Christ loves the Church.

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

1. Sermon Application

- Thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness and constant love through the seasons
- Pray for our church and our leaders for continued wisdom and strength as they continue to lead us with God's vision and direction
- Pray for our family members and friends, especially for those who have yet to know Him.
- To commit 2024 to God and allow Him to work in us and through us as we continue to seek Him.

2. RiverLife

- Pray for our church, that as we enter into 2024, we will determine to grow into Christlikeness.

3. World

- Pray for the situation Iceland where a volcanic eruption is affecting the nation.
- Pray for Japan as it recovers from the recent earthquake.
- Continue to pray for the conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas - for both nations to reach a ceasefire resolution.
- Pray for the COVID-19 surge in Singapore.
- Continue to pray for the Russia-Ukraine war and the avoidance of using nuclear weapons.
- Continue to pray for the civil unrest in Myanmar.

4. 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.

1. Goal Setting for Our Lives. By Caleb Ministry for Seniors Aged 55 & Above.

- Sat, 13 Jan 2024 | 9am to 12.30pm Grace Chapel (Level 1).
- This session, led by Rev David Wong, will help seniors kickstart the new year with setting personal goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound). Join fellow senior RiverLifers to learn:
 - How to set realistic and attainable goals that aligns with God's purpose for your life
 - How to progress in reaching your goals through the year
- About Rev David Wong: Rev Wong was the Senior Pastor of Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian Church. He has been in pastoral ministry for over forty years, during which he also served with Haggai Institute and authored a dozen books, including *Finishing Well*. He is a sought-after Bible teacher and mentor.
- Register by Tue, 9 Jan 2024: rlc.sg/caleb-goals
- Note:
 - Participants have to be registered to attend this session. Due to limited seating capacity for 70 pax, registration will close when seats are filled.
 - There is no fee for this session. A freewill offering will be collected to defray costs.
 - For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at christinetan@riverlife.org.sg.

2. Water Baptism Class.

- Sat, 27 Jan 2024 | 9am to 3.30pm Room 214/215 (Level 2)
- Water baptism is a public declaration of a believer's union and new identity in Christ and an outward expression of our commitment in receiving Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. If you desire to take the step of faith to be water-baptised, do join our baptism class to understand the significance and importance of baptism.
- Register for this class at rlc.sg/baptism-class by Tue, 23 Jan.
- For enquiries, please contact Karen Koh at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg.
- Please note:
 - Participants will have a one-hour lunch break at own expense.
 - Our upcoming Water Baptism Service will be held on Sun, 17 Mar at 2pm.

3. The RiverLife Welcome Lunch

- Sun, 21 Jan 2024 | 11.30am-1pm, Faith Chapel (Level 2)
- Relationships matter to us because church is family. If you are new to RiverLife, come join us for this Welcome Lunch so that we can get to know one another better. You'll get to meet fellow RiverLifers as well as our staff team members too. This session is for those who have not attended a Welcome Lunch previously. Due to capacity constraints, each guest may be accompanied by up to two family members or friends (including their host).
- RSVP online: rlc.sg/welcomelunch

1. YA Gatherings (For Young Adults in their 20s). First Saturday Every Month, 5pm-8.30pm Victory Chapel (Level 1).

The YA Gathering is a space where young adults can get together to connect and build community. This gathering is made up of two components – Community Conversations & Communal Dinner – both with a focus on relationship building and life conversations. If you are interested in joining the gatherings and would like to find out more, connect with us on our Telegram Channel: [rlc.sg/ya](https://t.me/rlc.sg/ya).

Gathering Dates: 6 Jan, 24 Feb, 6 Apr, 4 May, 1 Jun, 3 Aug, 7 Sep, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

YA Camp: 5-7 Jul

Christmas Outreach: 14 Dec

2. RiverLife Prayer Meetings.

- *RLC Prayer Room.* Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/rpr-watch)
- *Revive Nights.* Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/revivenights)

We encourage you to set aside every Wednesday for a time of fasting.

3. Quarterly Calendar for Key English Adult Congregation Events

**Some dates are tentative and subjected to change. Stay updated via our digital bulletin and our social media channels for the latest information.*

Quarter 1	Quarter 2
<p><u>January</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 Jan – YA Gathering • 13 Jan – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 21 Jan – EA Welcome Lunch • 27 Jan – Water Baptism Class #1 <p><u>February</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 Feb – YA Gathering, Caleb Ministry • 25 Feb – Q1 Leaders Huddle <p><u>March</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3, 17, 24 Mar – Marriage Preparation Course #1 • 17 Mar – Water Baptism Service #1 • 23 Mar – Parents Gathering #1 • 29 to 31 Mar – Good Friday / Easter Weekend 	<p><u>April</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 Apr to 22 Jun – YA Gathering, Alpha #1 • 07 Apr – Dating Couples Briefing #1 • 13 Apr – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 20 Apr – RTF (Hope, Healing, Freedom) <p><u>May</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 May – YA Gathering • 10 to 11 May – Leaders Advance • 24 to 31 May – Equipping #1 • 30 May to 01 Jun – SuperLife Camp <p><u>June</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2, 23, 30 Jun – Marriage Preparation Course #2 • 08 Jun – Caleb Ministry Gathering, Water Baptism Class #2 • 09 Jun – RiverLife AGM • 13 to 16 Jun – Youth Camp • 29 Jun – Parents Gathering #2

Calendar

Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<p><u>July</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 to 7 Jul – YA Camp• 13 Jul – Caleb Ministry• 14 Jul – Dating Couples Briefing #2• 20 to 21 Jul – RTF 1B• 21 Jul – EA Welcome Lunch• 28 Jul – Baptism Service #2 <p><u>August</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 03 Aug – YA Gathering• 03 Aug to 3 Oct – Alpha Run #2• 04 Aug – Q3 Leaders Huddle• 17 Aug – Parents Gathering #3• 24 to 25 Aug – RTF (Round Robin) <p><u>September</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 07 Sep – YA Gathering• 01 to 15 Sep – Marriage Preparation Course #3• 01 to 29 Sep – SPYces• 06 to 15 Sep – Equipping #2• 14 Sep – Caleb Ministry Gathering• 22 Sep – EA Mid-Autumn Lunch Outreach	<p><u>October</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 05 Oct – YA Gathering, Water Baptism Class #3• 06 to 20 – Marriage Preparation Course #3• 12 Oct – Caleb Ministry Gathering• 27 Oct – RTF (Essential Teachings) <p><u>November</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 02 Nov – YA Gathering• 10 Nov – Water Baptism Service #3• 15-24 Nov – Equipping #4• 23-25 Nov – Marriage Retreat <p><u>December</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14 Dec – YA Christmas Outreach, Caleb Ministry Gathering• 21-22 Dec – Christmas Outreach Weekend• 28 Dec – Parents Gathering #4

Ministry & Opportunities



1. The 9M Ministry.

This 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

2. Missions Microsite.

Discover how you can go, give and pray for the nations. Let's make a difference in the nations together! For more information, visit rlc.sg/missions.

3. RiverLife Cares Opportunities.

Enquiries/Registration: rlc.sg/serve-rlcar

4. Prayer Ministry.

If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. fear, worry, etc), you can sign up for RiverLife's RTF ministry: bit.ly/rlcrtf

1. 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)

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Stay Connected with RLC.

Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.

WhatsApp Broadcast: rlc.sg/wachannelinvite

Telegram Channel: t.me/RiverLifeChurch

Facebook & Instagram: [@riverlifechurchsg](https://www.instagram.com/riverlifechurchsg)

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