

Date: 17 Mar 2024 | **Speaker:** Ps Ernie Song | **Topic:** The Vine, The Flesh & The Spirit
Scripture: John 15, Romans 7:19-20, Galatians 5:13-26

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Remain in the vine by experiencing God daily, and to love one another as Christ loved us.
2. Understand generational differences to overcome them to unify the church.

SERMON SUMMARY

Jesus's joy is found in doing the Father's will. Likewise, our joy will be found in doing Jesus's will – by loving one another. The Holy Spirit shows us how to love. When we live by the Spirit, our love for others becomes effortless. But when we struggle to love because of our flesh, we go back to the law and discipline ourselves to obey it because it pleases the Lord when we obey. One key evidence of Spirit-Filled living is by how we love one another (others-centredness).

In today's culture, the church needs to model what it looks like to love others especially between the generations.

SERMON RECAP

Introduction

- The context to interpreting John 15 is the various things that have happened in John 13-14.
- What was on the disciples' minds:
 - Troubled because of the impending betrayal.
 - Servanthood example of Christ.
 - Jesus' command to love one another.
 - Jesus going away.
 - The coming of the Holy Spirit.

a) Abide & Love (John 15:9-17)

"Jesus delights to do His Father's will; His joy depends on pleasing His Father." – **D. A. Carson**

"Jesus' joy came from doing the Father's will, and the joy of the disciples would come from doing what Jesus commanded them." – **Colin Kruse**

- Jesus' joy comes from doing the Father's will. Similarly, our joy is found when we do Christ's will – loving one another.
- In the illustration of the vine and the branches, we can see that the branches are all connected to the vine. It is through the vine that the branches receive their nutrients from the soil. It is similar to what happens when we remain in Christ and remain in The Word. We live according to His ways and feed off His love.
- Another function of the vine is that it allows the branches to be connected to one another. It is through Christ that we are all connected. That is why in our spiritual communities Christ must be the centre of our relationships.
- Our relationships with each other must be different from that of the world. We need to help each other grow, and the only way to do that is through love. If not, we will always compete with one another and sometimes, unconsciously, one of the competing branches can break off from the vine (just like the disciples).
- Our joy will only be complete when we love one another because we are returning to the image of God in us – being others-centredness.

b) The Struggle of Spirit and Flesh (Romans 7:19-20)

- In **Leviticus 19:2**, God commanded us to be holy. The rest of **Leviticus 19** tells us how to be holy, with many of the laws related to how you treat others. In essence, being holy means to love your neighbour as yourself.
- The Spirit-filled life enables us to love others with the love we have received from the Lord.
- But, in reality, our desires and our actions are not in agreement all the time. This is due to the sinful nature within us.
- Ideally, living by the Spirit is effortless. But there are times when we need to discipline ourselves to do it simply because it is the right thing to do and out of love for God. These are the moments where the voice of our flesh is loud and overwhelms our inner desires. It is a conflict between our spirits and our flesh.
- We need to remember the love of Christ compels us to love so that God is glorified. The Holy Spirit within us will always show us the right way to relate with others.
- When we lack the strength to love others as the Spirit leads, we lean into discipline – “forcing” ourselves to do it because it pleases Christ (**John 14:15-17**). But as we continue to “force” ourselves to love, the discipline slowly turns into delight.

c) Spirit-Filled Living (Galatians 5:13-26)

- Paul’s differentiation of living according to the flesh and by the Spirit highlights how we relate to each other.
- The way of the flesh is “me-centred” and takes advantage of the other person, destroying relationships. The way of the Spirit promotes healthy relationships.
- The world’s freedom is, “If it makes you happy, do it”. The most important thing is that the individual is happy. But God’s freedom and joy is found when we love as Christ loved us.
- Keeping in step with the Spirit (Spirit-filled living) means to love as Christ loved. We must learn to live according to the Spirit when dealing with each other.

Closing

We are the branches; Christ is the vine. We are connected to each other through the vine. For us to love one another, we need to be led and filled by the Spirit. So that we reflect the nature of God and be others-centred.

Ps Ernie’s Burden for RiverLife (Malachi 4:5-6)

- There is a great divide between the young and old in the church today highlighted by ministry models and song choices.
- There are roughly about three generations in the church today. The Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (1928-1964), Gen X (1964-1980), and the Millennials and Gen Z (1981-2012). Each generation grew up in vastly different eras and holds values differering to each other. The church today has a lot of tension and clashes due to generational differences.
- For RiverLife to truly become the divine river that flows into the community, we must overcome the generational hurdle. The different generations need to learn to come together, to work together, and to love one another.
- Addressing the Millennials and Gen Zs: You are not the up-and-coming church; you are the church. But remember that the church you grew up in was built by the previous generation. You are enjoying what you did not toil for. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to isolate yourself from the older generation and to create exclusivity (orphan spirit). This promotes division – the work of the flesh. Therefore, be more inclusive of other generations. Also, don’t see the church as a service provider. You have a part to play to make the church work.
- Addressing the Baby Boomers and Silent Generation: The biggest mistake you can make is to say that now is the time for the younger generation to take over. Because the church is meant for all generations to work together. Although you want to pass the baton to the younger generation, you can still serve as a lamppost for them. You need to embrace them and work together with them to strengthen and grow the church (**Psalms 71:17-18**). Yesterday’s approaches and mindsets may need to change in order to be aligned to what God is doing in the generations.
- Addressing the Gen Xs: The devil is working very hard to take away the Gen Xs from the church. That is because it is very difficult for the Gen Zs and Millennials to reach out to the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers. The gap is too wide. The Gen Xs need to rise up to bridge that gap and be more involved in ministry and key leadership roles within the church.
- Everyone must work together to build up the church. We need each other (**Psalms 133:1-2a, 3b**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can I understand the older/younger generation better? What is the best way to relate to them?

Leader's Notes

There is a great divide between the young and the old in the church today as highlighted by ministry models and song choices. It is natural for people similar to us in station, in status, in age, to congregate together. However, that creates a divide within the community of believers.

In [Galatians 5:13-26](#), Paul says that we must live according to the Spirit. The way of the flesh is “me-centred” and takes advantage of the other person – destroying relationships. The way of the Spirit promotes healthy relationships. The Holy Spirit within us will always show us the right way to relate with each other. When we lack the strength to love others as the Spirit leads, we lean into discipline – “forcing” ourselves to do it because it pleases Christ ([Galatians 5:25-26](#)).

When relating to a different generation, the best way is to approach from a posture of humility. There are things to learn from each other, no matter the differences in age or background. Importantly, listen first before speaking.

Transition

The Holy Spirit will always show us the right way to relate with each other.

2. Do you think God is pleased with your cell's state of “loving one another as Christ has loved us”? What can you do to change/improve on that?

Leader's Notes

There are two things to reflect upon in this question.

- 1) Reflect on your cell in general. Is your cell loving towards one another? Is that love genuine or superficial?
- 2) Reflect on yourself – your relationship with the other cell members. Have you been loving towards them? Is your love conditional? Does your love extend beyond the meeting or only confined to only that time? Or is your love only for certain members and excludes the others?

The reflections may cause some painful realisations. But this is the first step to building better relationships within the cell. You may realise that there are some members that you are not so ‘close’ to. Or that in general you don't really ‘love’ your cell – not in the sense of [John 15:9](#).

This is the time to think of practical/concrete actions you can take to love your cell members better.

Transition

One of Christ's wills for us is to love one another as how He has loved us. Let's put this into action.

3. How have you teamed up with others to serve God? Who can you support as they serve Him with their unique gifts?

Leader's Notes

The church promotes community and not competition. Everyone in the church can work together to serve God in some way. Even supporting (practical or moral support) someone who is serving in a ministry is a form of service to God.

Team up with others to volunteer for RiverLife Cares or an RCS programme. You can also team up and sign up for a ministry to serve in the church. Or if you know someone who is already serving/volunteering, maybe offer them some



Discussion Questions

help or the support that they may need. It could simply be a meal together, prayer support, or even to lighten their load in other ways.

There are many ways to show your support (and appreciation). Better yet, join in the serving as well!

Closing

Everyone has a role to play in transforming the church into a loving family.

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 for God to awaken the desire in us to love one another as how Christ has loved us.
- Pray for us to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as He shows us how to love.
- Pray that God will enable us to live in faith and obedience even as we seek and pursue Him
- Pray that we will continue to find delight in God even as we devote ourselves to the 21 days of Prayer and Fasting.

2. RiverLife

- Pray for our church, that as we enter into a season of prayer and fasting, that God will align all of our hearts and do what He needs to do so that we can live in a new normal that glorifies Him.

3. World

- Continue to pray for the various nations that are at war:
 - a. Russia and Ukraine
 - b. Myanmar (Civil War) – Pray for the situation where military service was made compulsory for man and woman between the ages of 18 and 35.
 - c. Israel & Hamas
- Continue to pray for countries that have an escalated conflict situation:
 - a. China and the Philippines in the South China Sea
 - b. North & South Korea
- Continue to pray for countries recovering from recent natural disasters:
 - a. Japan (Earthquake)
 - b. Iceland (Volcanic Eruption)
- Pray for Singapore
 - a. Pray against the rise of young drug abusers
 - b. Pray for a stability in the cost of living in Singapore
 - c. Pray for the Zika cluster in Boon Lay Place
- Pray for Indonesia as a new president has just been appointed.
- Pray for the situation in Korea where there is a strike by the medical professionals which is affecting the sick.

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. Alpha Course. 20 Apr – 13 Jul.** If you have questions about Christianity that you are seeking answers for, we invite you to join us for Alpha - a series of interactive sessions that explores the basics of the Christian faith.
 - For More Information: rlc.sg/alpha
 - To Sign Up: rlc.sg/join-alpha (Closing Date: 7 April)
- 2. 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting - Revive Us, Lord, Align our hearts to Yours. 11-31 Mar.** The days we live in hold many distractions, alluring pathways, and enticing agendas which can cause our hearts to wander. Once again, we need to remember that we are God's beloved children, called to share His love in our broken world, and we must never slip into spiritual apathy and forget our calling. This is why we're setting apart 21 days leading up to Easter to deepen our fellowship with Christ – meditating on His word, enjoying His presence and hearing Him speak to us. We will fix our gaze on the Lord and give Him our full attention – putting away everything else that would distract or distance us from the simple act of sitting at His feet. As we pursue Him together and collectively desire to be in communion with Him, we know that God's heart will not only be filled with delight, but also be moved to fulfil His purposes through us.
 - For 21 days from 11-31 Mar, we are committing ourselves to:
 - Daily Devotion
 - Daily Fasting
 - Nightly Worship & Prayer
 - Sermon Series based on John 13-16
 - Join us on this shared journey: rlc.sg/21days
 - As the Lord re-aligns and revives our hearts during this season of prayer & fasting, do share your thanksgiving or testimony on how God ministered to you. Write to us at stories@riverlife.org.sg.
- 3. MegaLife Camp 2024. Thu-Sun, 13-16 Jun. Thistle Hotel, Johor Bahru. For Youths Aged 13-18.** If you are a parent of a teen or know someone who's a teen, invite them for our annual Youth camp! Registration opens first week of April and more details will be shared.
 - Early Bird (6-15 Apr): \$280
 - Regular (16-22 Apr): \$320
- 4. The Parents Gathering. 27 Apr, 2.30pm-6pm. Grace Chapel.** This platform is designed to help parents of various life-stages to grow in their roles as parents, as well as support one another in their parenting journey. Each quarterly gathering will include short teachings, group connection time, refreshments, as well as parents processing time.
 - No fees required
 - Closing Date: 17 April 2024
 - Registration: rlc.sg/pg
- 5. Family Life Portal.**
 - Our Family Life ministry strengthens relationships within the family so that they are reflective of who God is – married couples loving and serving each other, parents discipling their children in the ways of God, grandparents inspiring the generations by their faith and actions, and the singles living secure and fruitful lives for God's kingdom! RiverLife's Family Life portal is an online platform that contains this year's calendar of Family Life initiatives as well as a wide range of resources for various life stages.
 - Access the portal: rlc.sg/familylife or www.riverlife.org.sg (Under the "Resources" tab)

- 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 Apr, 4 May, 1 Jun, 3 Aug, 7 Sep, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

YA Camp: 5-7 Jul

Christmas Outreach: 14 Dec

- 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.

- 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
<u>March</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3, 17, 24 Mar – Marriage Preparation Course #1 • 8 to 10 Mar – FOPx Conference (Youth) • 17 Mar – Water Baptism Service #1 • 29 to 31 Mar – Good Friday / Easter Weekend 	<u>April</u> <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 • 27 Apr – The Parent’s Gathering <u>May</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 May – YA Gathering • 17 to 18 May – Leaders Advance • 24 to 31 May – Equipping #1: Numbers • 30 May to 01 Jun – SuperLife Camp <u>June</u> <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 • 27 Jun – Fun Day (Youth) • 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 – RLC 33rd Anniversary Weekend, 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 – SPYCs • 06 to 15 Sep – Equipping #2: Deuteronomy • 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 • 13 Oct – Discipleship @ Home for Pre-School Parents (Parents Equipping) • 16 to 23 Oct – Feast of the Tabernacles • 19 Oct – Fun Day (Youth) • 26 Oct – Local Outreach (Youth) <p><u>November</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 02 Nov – YA Gathering • 7 to 9 Nov – Ministry Orientation Camp for Sec 1s (Youth) • 10 Nov – Discipleship @ Home for Primary School Parents (Parents Equipping) • 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 • 19 to 21 Dec – Youth Conference • 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-rlcares

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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