

Series -

Date/s -

7 January 2018

Topic - "Back to the Future" (Jeremiah 29:10-14)

Speaker/s -

Pastor Benny Ho

Welcome [15 min]

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

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like "10,000 Reasons", "Cornerstone", "Good Good Father" or "Here In Your Presence".

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Understand that God's plans for us in this new year is to prosper us, and not to harm us;
2. Understand that our history with God yesterday and our walk with God today; tutor us to trust Him totally for tomorrow.

Word [45 min]

Pastor Benny started with exhorting the congregation - as we enter a brand new year, we must learn to trust an unknown future to a known God. God is sovereign, and good, and He will bring His will to pass in 2018!

Pastor Benny next expounded from the book of Jeremiah 29, verses 10-14. While Jeremiah 29:11 is an oft-quoted "feel good" verse today, this verse was written in the context of God's judgment on Israel during its seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah had previously proclaimed the 70-year judgment on the people, but they refused to believe the same, choosing instead to surround themselves with false prophets. God's word prevailed, and the people of Israel reeled under hopelessness and despair as their days of captivity grew longer. At this critical juncture, God once again (through Jeremiah) declared to them that in His time He will restore them, and bring them back to their homeland. In particular, God gave His specific promise in Jeremiah 29:11. This verse still has deep theological underpinnings for us believers today.

Pastor Benny took the congregation through a comprehensive word study of Jeremiah 29:11.

First, he shared that the word "know" is the Hebrew word "yada", and speaks of different ways of gaining information through our senses. It is used to describe men's knowledge of God, and God's knowledge of men. It also denotes sexual intercourse (e.g. "Adam knew Eve"). In other words, God knows us so intimately. He alone has complete knowledge of creation. He will certainly know what's best for us, and how we fit into this world He created. This is why we can have security in this world in midst of our troubles and problems.

Next, Pastor Benny shared that the word "plans" comes from the root word "khashav" which means "to think, to count, to impute, to reckon". Two mental illustrations come to mind: a weaver, and a composer. It is a wonderful reminder that life is not always neat- there are different seasons in life, both good and bad. In order to write a melody, there must be both high and low notes. In similar fashion, God takes all of our ups and downs, and transforms our lives into a beautiful masterpiece. Pastor Benny highlighted that God allows trials in

our lives, not to smite us, but to refine us and draw us close to Him. Christlikeness is the end-goal of our discipleship journey!

Pastor Benny then taught that the word “prosper” is “shalom”. This word goes beyond “peace” to include “completeness in number, safety and soundness in health, wholeness in being, prosperity and total well-being”. He also shared that the phrase “not to harm you” can literally be translated as “and not of evil”. The word for “evil” is “rah” which means “rotten, spoilt or good for nothing”. Pastor Benny highlighted that God has new things for each of us to discover in 2018; things which would prosper us and not harm us. These new things are only found within the context of a relationship with God. He alone provides all other aspects of completeness. The essence of good is rooted in the Person of God, and the essence of evil is rooted in the Absence of God.

The final part of this promise is that God’s plans are to give us “hope and a future” or a “future with hope”. The KJV translates this as “an expected end”. The word “expected” is the Hebrew word “tikva” which means “expectation or hope”. The NIV translated it as “future”. Pastor Benny shared that this is the Hebrew word “akhareth” which comes from the root word “akhar” which ironically means “posterity, afterward, backwards or after part”. He concluded that our history with God yesterday and our walk with God today, tutor us to trust Him totally for tomorrow.

Let us enter 2018 with hope!

Discussion Questions

(Q1 & Q2 – 10min, focus on Q3 & Q4 – 35min)

1. **Pastor Benny concluded the sermon by saying that “our history with God yesterday and our walk with God today tutor us to trust Him totally for tomorrow!” Reflecting on the year 2017, share with the Cell on thanksgiving items that show God’s faithfulness.**

Leader’s Notes: *This is a recap and ice-breaking question for cell members to share on uplifting items to encourage one another.. For members who had a tough 2017, encourage them to reflect on the good in their lives even in the midst of difficulties. God is in control and He will make all things beautiful in His time!*

2. **Pastor Benny shared his observation that people generally fall within one of two categories when dealing with trials and uncertainties. One group struggle to use their human logic to figure out the reason behind, frequently misunderstanding God in the process, while the other group resigns to fatalism and adopt a “whatever will be, will be” mentality.**

Reflect on your attitude when low points arise in our lives. Which perspectives do we default to? What attitude should we have instead?

Leader’s Notes: *A relate question. This question allows members to identify and share deeper about their subconscious responses when the storms of life hit, and how it may be preventing them from achieving breakthroughs. Instead of struggling or an attitude of fatalism, God wants us to rise in faith above our circumstances and see things from His perspective. Only then will we then see the beautiful masterpiece God is weaving in our lives- not just individually, but collectively as a church! God has bigger things in mind beyond just our personal destiny.*

If time permits, have the cell meditate on Romans 8:28-29 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He

foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

3. **Pastor Benny taught that the Hebrew root word for “future” is “akhareth”. It carries the rich imagery of a person rowing ahead with his back to the future, facing his past. Pastor Benny also drew a modern-day analogy to a crew competing in a boat race regatta. As the crew pulls the oars, they are unable to see where they are going. Instead, they take complete direction from the coxswain. The coxswain sits in the stern of the boat facing the crew, and he is the only person who is not facing backwards. He makes tactical decisions, diagnoses and solves problems. He is the coach aboard the boat.**

In similar fashion, Jesus is the Christian’s coxswain. His hand is on the rudder of our lives.

Take some time to reflect on our attitudes of dependence on Him today. Are we trying to be the captain of our ships, the master of our fates? Or do we allow Jesus to direct and guide us where He wants us to go?

[15 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A reflect question. Have members explore their daily walk with God, and renew dependence on Jesus in light of this revelation. This question underscores the reality that we are not in control of our lives and have never been- Jesus is. He alone sees what we cannot see, and marks out the race set before us. He knows what is up ahead and gives us the motivation and encouragement we need. Our part is to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). With our eyes fixed firmly on Him, and remembering his faithfulness to us in the past, we can move confidently with Him through the currents of life.*

4. **As we enter 2018, we must believe that God’s plan for us is to live in shalom in every arena of our lives- body, soul and spirit. We are to enter the new year with hope; a steady, quiet expectation of good things to come.**

What are some promises that you are desiring and trusting God for fulfilment for this new year as an individual and as a cell? List out some practical steps we can take to deepen our trust in God in these areas.

[20 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a response question. Have members brainstorm ways they can deepen their trust in God by exercising faith to bring about God’s promises into fulfilment, while waiting for specific breakthroughs in their lives. Leaders may get members to break into small groups to share more and if time permit, to pray for one another to ask God to show them new things that God has in store for them individually, and as a cell, in 2018. Members can also pray that the cell will enter the new year anchored and rooted in God, acknowledging Him, so that we will be able to experience the fullness of His blessings.*

Works [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. We will continue to trust in His divine guidance for everyday in 2018, believing with all of our hearts that He is good all the times.

Announcements

1. Evangelism Explosion (EE)
Sat, 27 Jan | 2.30pm | Grace Chapel
Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 21 Jan.
Next run of EE training will commence in March 2018

2. Unlocking the Gospel of Mark Course
Sun, 28 Jan | 2.30pm – 5pm | Grace Chapel
Register online at <https://goo.gl/EqA4zV>

3. Water Baptism Class
Sat, 3 Feb | 9.30am - 3.30pm | Faith Chapel
Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 28 Jan.
Baptism Service will be on 11 Mar.

Church Vision Statement:

“A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father’s glory from generation to generation.”