

Series -

Date/s -

14 Jan 2018

Topic - Vision Sunday: Prepare The Way

Speaker/s -

SP Lionel Goh

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 “You'll Come”, “Show Me Your Face” or “Worth It All”.

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Be intensely delighted by God's vision for 2018 and beyond
2. Commit to create space for God to come and renew our hearts

Word [45 min]

SP Lionel Goh began his Vision Sunday message by looking back briefly at Jeremiah 29:11 from last week's New Year message by Pastor Benny Ho. Pastor Lionel reminded us that God indeed has a plan for us – both as individuals and as a church. We are to look to Jesus as our coxswain for direction and guidance.

He then launched into Isaiah 40:1-11 to give us a picture of where God is leading us in 2018 and beyond, and how we are to “prepare the way of the Lord.” (v3). Focusing on verses 3-5, he showed us how these commands of God have important spiritual implications for us today: We need to heal our heart attitudes!

The prophetic text in Isaiah 40:3-5 was not just applicable to the Jews living in exile in Babylon 120 years after Isaiah's ministry. It also came to pass when John the Baptist announced the coming of our Lord Jesus in the first century. Today, this call of God is just as relevant for the Body of Christ in our nation. Prominent church leaders in Singapore have exhorted the Church to prepare for God's new season in 2018 and in the next few years. We are to prepare our hearts with God before we can answer our Antioch Call, as prophesied by Billy Graham 40 years ago in Singapore. A generation has since passed. Now it is time to embrace the call to reach the majority of our population yet unsaved.

For RiverLife, 2018 is a Year of Preparation and Prayer. Pastor Lionel shared the need for this vision, i.e.,

1. To create space for God to come and renew our hearts for Him
2. To be empowered by Him to reach out to the lost and needy in our communities. See Luke 4:18-19.
3. To have His passion and power for missionary works in the world.

What then can we do in 2018 to ensure that this vision come to pass?

In our personal life, we can:

- i. Resolve to get rid of our sins and worldly distractions so that we may seek the Lord.

See Colossians 3:1-2, 5.

- ii. Make time to be in God's presence and delight in Him
- iii. Hear God in His Word
- iv. Pray for ourselves and for others
- v. Live out a Spirit-filled life of obedience and love at home, in school and at the workplace.

In our cells and in church, we can:

- vi. Encourage our fellow brothers and sisters to align their hearts to God, and care for them
- vii. Strengthen our personal relationships in the cell and in church.

We will embark on this call with the church's help. Pastor Lionel shared some spiritual initiatives that we have in place to guide us along:

- a. Expository preaching of the Gospel of Mark for 27 weeks
- b. Daily devotional resources
- c. Learning together during cell meetings
- d. Zonal camps and retreats to encounter God and foster stronger relationships
- e. Weekends of learning and equipping courses
- f. Church and national prayer initiatives

So let us say "YES!" to God's new season of preparation and prayer!

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Jeremiah 29:11. Last Sunday, Pastor Benny Ho challenged us to look "back to the future." As a review, share with the cell further thoughts you may have since last week on the plans, resolutions or decisions you have personally made in light of that message.** [5 min]

Leader's Notes: *A recap question. Pastor Benny encouraged us to look to our Coxswain Jesus for our future direction while we look back to His past faithfulness. Even though we can't change our past or control our future, we can embrace the present in faith, because He was faithful in the past, and we can therefore trust Him for the future. Encourage members to share how God might have spoken to them since last week or if they have changed their plans because of what they have heard last Sunday.*

2. **Read Isaiah 40:1-11. From this passage, Pastor Lionel revealed how each verse has a spiritual implication for us today, both as a church and as an individual. As you chew over the passage, particularly verses 3-5, which verse or verses speak to you and which do not? Why?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A relate question. This question gives members an opportunity to interpret scripture in light of their own journey of faith. Pastor Lionel's interpretation of Isaiah 40:3-5 follows for further discussion:*

1. "Raise up the valley" = Be strengthened and encouraged when we are down and out
2. "Make low the mountain and hill" = Be willing to be humble, teachable and submissive
3. "Smoothen the rough ground and rugged places" = Be willing to put aside our besetting sin, bad attitude, addiction, and carnal lifestyle
4. "The glory of the Lord will be revealed" = When we have obeyed the above, we shall see His glory.

Pastor Lionel taught that the prophetic message also holds true for us today who long for God's new season of refreshment in our church and nation.

3. **In 1978, well-known evangelist Billy Graham made the prophetic declaration that Singapore would be an Antioch of Asia. What do you know about this prophecy? Has the Singapore Church heeded this prophetic call in the last 40 years? Share your thoughts and insights.** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A reflect question. Antioch was a city in New Testament times in a region where Turkey is today. This city became home to the first church outside of the land of Israel and was the first place in which followers of Jesus were referred to as Christians. It was here that the Gospel of Matthew was written. It was here that Peter and Paul preached to the Gentiles. It was also the central point where missionaries were sent forth. The city's geographical, military, and economic location contributed to the advancement of the Gospel. If Singapore is the Antioch of Asia, this has critical implications for us as Christians who are called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, just as the church in Antioch did. Many respected Christian leaders in Singapore are all in agreement on our Antioch calling, and they are challenging us to embrace it fully in this generation. Bishop Rennis Ponniah of the Anglican Church has announced 2018 as a Year of Prayer, 2019 as a Year of Proclamation, and 2020 as Year of Personal Discipleship. SP Lawrence Khong of Love Singapore and SP Yang Tuck Yoong of Festival of Praise have both declared 2018 as a Year of Fasting and Prayer for Singapore.

Members can share their personal reflections of whether the Singapore Church has risen to this call. Leaders can wrap up the discussion by asking members to prayerfully consider how they can play a positive role for spiritual breakthroughs in 2018 and beyond.

4. **Pastor Lionel exhorted us to embrace God's new vision for 2018 by engaging in three things: create space for Him to renew our hearts; be empowered by Him to reach out to the lost and needy; and have His passion for missionary works in the world. He listed seven ways we can do this personally, in the cell and in church. Pore over the list (above) and share the areas you are already doing well in, the areas you find challenging, and the areas you will commit to immediately.** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question. God gives His vision to those who are good stewards. He is looking for stewards who will carry out His vision well, even in the face of criticism, frustration or spiritual attack. Because God's vision does not operate on our agendas or cultural norms, we may encounter opposition. But God entrusts His vision to those He knows will persevere through challenges and warfare. God also gives His vision to those who are faithful in small things, and He will give a greater vision to those who are being faithful in what is already in their charge. The Bible teaches us that God rewards His faithful servants. "You have been faithful with a few things: I will put you in charge of many things" (Matthew 25:23). The good news is that it is never too late to start following God's vision. We are always at the right point in our lives to decide to honor God and to delight in Him. And when we do that, we will experience the joy of God at work in our lives. Encourage the cell to prepare the way of the Lord and prayerfully commit to Him in the year ahead so that we may bring glory to Him.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. That God will empower us to embrace 2018 as a Year of Preparation and Prayer; to renew our love and delight in Jesus; and to live a life marked by complete dependence on the Holy Spirit.

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>
Register by Sun, 21 Jan
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.”