

Series - On Your Mark!

Date/s - 25 Feb 2018

Topic - Temporary Pass

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

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 “God Be Praised”, “Stronger”, “Hosanna” or “All Hail King Jesus”.

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Commit to be a “roof-breaker” friend to someone
2. Pursue inner healing over physical healing
3. Look at every trial from an eternal perspective.

Word [45 min]

Continuing in the Gospel of Mark series, Pastor Ernie expounded on the story of the paralytic and the four friends from Chapter 2:1-12. He reminded us that during that period in Israel where God was silent and the Jews were in Roman captivity, sickness and poverty abounded among God’s people. When Jesus came on the scene with His distinctive teaching and miraculous healing, they pinned their hopes on Him as their long-awaited Messiah to free them from their bondage in Rome. They flocked to Him everywhere to hear Him and to seek a miracle from Him.

In that perilous time, the Jews believed that sin and sickness were connected. The link between sin and sickness, forgiveness and restoration of health, is illustrated in an early rabbinic saying: “A sick man does not recover from his sickness until all his sins are forgiven him, as it is written, ‘Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases’ [Ps. 103:3].”

In Mark 2, Jesus was teaching in a house packed with people, including Jewish leaders. Outside, four men were trying to get their paralytic friend in to Jesus for healing but they could not get past the crowd. Determined to get Jesus’ attention, they climbed unto the top of the house, broke the roof, and lowered their friend on a mat right in front of Him. Seeing what had just happened, Jesus commended their faith, forgave the paralytic and healed him completely. Without these four men, the paralytic would never have walked again, let alone get an audience with Jesus.

From this passage, Pastor Ernie drew three lessons for us. We all need:

1. A “roof-breaker” friend, and be a “roof-breaker” friend to others. Such friends stick around no matter what. In the church especially in the cell group, unless lives intersect and we “love out loud”, we would not be a loving community of believers, where we can provide encouragement, prayers, proclamations, faith declarations for one another. Pastor Ernie exhorted us to invest time in each other’s lives in order to give practically of what we freely receive from God. See Matthew 25:40.

2. Pursue inner healing as compared to physical healing. Citing James 5:16, Pastor Ernie encouraged us to have a practice of confession to a trusted Christian friend, taking the leap of faith to be vulnerable and open to each other. This will open the door for the Cell group to get stronger as the relationships will become stronger.
3. To have an eternal perspective of our circumstances. Sharing from Paul's word in Philippians 1:21 "... to live is Christ and to die is gain...", Pastor Ernie urged us to consider our lives and its present circumstances as temporary. Instead, we should pin our hope on our heavenly destination. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Mark 2:1-12. Imagine yourself as one standing among the packed crowd in the house where this is all happening, what do you see? What impacts you personally at that moment and why? (Was it the shock of seeing the roof falling apart? Or what Jesus says? Or what He does? Or what is happening to the paralytic?)** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *This is a recap and ice-breaking question for members to share from their perspectives what they just read from the passage. Encourage them to use their 'holy' imagination to read the Bible. God calls us not just to learn the truth of His word, but to "impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul..." [Deut 11:18]. This means that we need to let the word of God saturate our mind and soak into our heart and soul. And we do this by using our imagination, not just our intellect. The intellect can understand the truth while the imagination can see the truth. Through imagination we can see the reality of God's word and picture ourselves in that reality. So instead of "using our imagination to engage in a fantasy that escapes reality in an alternate world, we let the Holy Spirit sanctify our imagination and use it to penetrate reality and connect us with His Word." [Preaching and Teaching with Imagination, Warren Wiersbe, Baker Books 1994]*

2. **In John 15:13, Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." What are the obstacles that prevent you from being a roof-breaker friend to another? And how can thinking about Jesus' act of ultimate sacrifice help you do so?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A reflect and relate question. Leaders can encourage members to share their personal reflections on what obstacles prevent them to be a roof-breaker friend to another. Living a sacrificial life like Jesus in the world today is not easy for sure. No one will deny that we will not struggle to be like Jesus or even be like the four friends to the paralytic. Our own circumstances are challenging enough, to say nothing of having the faith and courage to lay down our lives for others. Before we can be roof-breakers, will we ourselves be open and vulnerable enough to receive help from other roof-breakers? We all need a roof-breaker friend.*

Challenge the group with a follow-up question, "Do you have roof-breaker friends in your life? People who look out for you, have your back, and love you unconditionally?" In a typical Singapore church culture, faith is a private affair. We have very little time for one another, let alone speak life to each other. What is our stumbling block? Is it inconvenience? Busyness? Personal struggles? Jesus went beyond these and more to die on the cross for us. Let's break out of this inward-looking bubble and encourage each other to dwell in Jesus' commands "to love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." [John 13:34-35] And also, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." [Matthew 25:40]

3. **Read James 5:16.** Our cell conversations usually revolve around topics other than the deeper issues of the heart and soul. Confession of sins is a lost sacrament in the church. We usually “confess” or present our sicknesses, our issues at work, or our problems with children for prayer but rarely confess to one another our deepest struggles with sin. Discuss how we can allow ourselves to be vulnerable and authentic in the cell and in church. [15 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a response question. Leaders can encourage the Cell to explore the reasons why the discussions of more intimate and deeper struggles are difficult. Fear, pride, anger and other strongholds that individuals struggle with would impede sharing. Members can share how they can be more supportive to one another when it comes to sharing and praying through these struggles.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16 commands us to be truthful about our sins to one another so that we can pray for each other and be healed. This scripture is not only talking about physical healing. Sins can be forgiven and we can receive healing.

As Jesus said in Mark 2:9, “Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” Jesus is more concerned with our inner healing, which is infinite, than our physical healing, which is temporary. We must therefore pursue inner healing over physical healing. Because from God’s perspective, our souls matter more than our bodies. Here on earth, we are on a temporary pass, not on a permanent residency. “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” [Philippians 1:21]

For this reason, our perspective then must match God’s, which is eternal and heaven-bound. “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.” [1 Thessalonians 4:13]. Of course we should continue to pray for healing from illnesses but our focus as authentic Christians must be forgiveness of sins and transformation of hearts. Encourage the members to ask God for the same intensity to deal with their inner issues as they have in dealing with their health issues.

Works [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. Each of us will become a roof-breaker in an authentic, confessing community, with our eyes set on eternal things.

Announcements

1. Baptism Service

Sun, 11 Mar | 2.30pm | Victory Chapel

We praise the Lord that 36 RiverLifers are getting baptized, please come and support them if you are available.

2. Precept Bible Study

40-Min Study | Jesus: Listening for His Voice (Mark 7-13)

Course Dates: 24 Apr, 3, 15, 22, 31 May & 5 Jun (Weekly)

Please register by 15 Apr

3. Lent Prayer Room

Fridays, 16 & 23 Mar | 8pm-10pm | Worship Centre

Programme for children aged 4-12 will run concurrently at Grace Chapel.

For catering purposes, kindly register your attendance at

bit.ly/riverlifeent2018 or at the Information Counter by Sun, 11 Mar.

Church Vision Statement:

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